

Florian Mayr

Der kraft-Mayr

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FLORIAN MAYR

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[DER KRAFT-MAYR]

A HUMOROUS TALE OF MUSICAL LIFE .

BY

ERNST VON WOLZOGEN

ENGLISH BY

EDWARD BRECK

AND

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TO THE MEMORY OF
FRANZ LISZT

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FLORIAN MAYR

CHAPTER I

The Sensitive Artist

ON the third floor of one of the oldest houses on the Luisenplatz in Berlin, Florian Mayr, the pianist, occupied a furnished room which he hired of the widow Stoltenhagen. The plain whitewashed ceiling was low and discolored by smoke, the cheap wallpaper was badly damaged, and the floor which was very uneven and footworn had once been painted gray; but on the other hand the room was unusually large and, what with its two little windows to the west and its two little windows to the north, it was light and cheery. And large, indeed, that room had to be where Florian Mayr's powerful and sinewy paws pounded the keys; otherwise the volume of sound that gushed from his concert grand would have fairly burst the walls or in the long run would at least have seriously injured the sensitive ears of this piano-tamer.

Herr Florian Mayr was a wonderful man. He was young, only twenty-three, neither handsome, elegant, nor rich; such a man is by no means likely to make much of an impression upon a Berlin landlady, especially when he shakes the whole house with his piano playing and adds insult to injury by buying and pre-

paring his own tea and coffee; but it is an actual fact that Florian Mayr did mightily impress Frau Stoltenhagen as well as her niece from Pomerania and her servant from Müncheberg. The truth is this young pianist was a man of well-defined purposes in life; one could see that by his nose which lay in the middle of his thin, beardless, rather sallow face like a stray boulder on a level heath. For a man with such a nose one would be careful not to write a P for a Q and even the good-natured little brown eyes, which on occasion fairly danced with merriment, could also flash terribly when Florian Mayr flew into a rage, a thing which might easily happen whenever the three women who ministered to his needs failed to satisfy his exacting demands as to punctuality, order, and neatness. With perfect serenity he had promised the serving-maid to bat her about the ears with his cast-iron bootjack if she continued night after night to shove that implement as far under the bed as she possibly could. This assurance she had taken seriously and on the strength of it had summed up her judgment in the significant statement: "Herr Mayr can lay about him for fair, he's that strong!"

That was it; the natural strength of his character filled the women with timidity and awe. He was a whole man in spite of his long, artist's hair which, smoothly brushed back from his high narrow forehead, hung in straight lines down to his neck. Besides, his life was so well ordered as to be almost uncanny. He regulated it by the watch, paid his bills promptly, and never brought home with him too much alcohol or any other nocturnal companion. Frau Stoltenhagen was also aware that her tenant gave lessons in the best houses and received from five to ten marks an hour.

Her niece from Pomerania, Fräulein Frieda, also approved of a regular life; moreover she was a very pretty and wholesome girl. In a case like that how could one tell — it would not have been so bad. Meanwhile the good landlady indemnified herself for the breakfast and supper which he did not procure from her by innocently participating in his supply of groceries, soap, and tooth-powder. There was another problem that agitated the breast of Frau Stoltenhagen: how was a young man of so prematurely ripe manhood, whose conduct was so alarmingly exemplary, to be accounted for? There must be some mystery about him. Following this line of thought, she subjected all communications addressed to Herr Florian Mayr to a searching scrutiny whenever by chance or strategy she got hold of any. Her suspicions reached out in two directions: Florian Mayr was either already consumed by a "grande passion" or else he was something other than he gave himself out to be. How often had Frau Stoltenhagen lingered in deep meditation before the life-size plaster bust of Franz Liszt which stood between the windows on a black wooden pedestal at the left of the piano, and had grown thoughtful when she perceived the resemblance between her tenant and this musical Titan. There was the same narrow bony face, the same all-dominating nose, the same long straight hair. As to mouth and eyes, to be sure, they differed and instead of the five warts of the Master Herr Florian had but one. Could it be that he was the son of Franz Liszt by some Russian princess or other? It is true, he said that his father was a humble organist in Bayreuth but what did that amount to? The Russian princess could have bought up a Bayreuth organist with a handful of rubles. Frau Stoltenhagen

had a lively imagination. To her mind the matter was practically proven and if, in spite of this, she was still untiring in her search for documentary proofs, this was the expression only of a certain excess of official zeal which during her many years of intercourse with her late husband, the city clerk, had become a part of her nature.

It was half past nine in the morning of the eleventh of November, 1879. It was a day like any other. Florian Mayr had risen as usual at eight, had made coffee, and then as usual had played scales and finger-exercises for an hour. The first lesson he had to give to-day was at ten. Accordingly he was about to make ready to go out but on this occasion he had certain new and peculiar measures to take. He folded a sheet of writing paper three times and cut it with a knife into eight pieces. On each of these eight slips he wrote with a pen in large vertical strokes a weighty and significant word. Then from another sheet he cut some very narrow strips and covered them with gum arabic.

He had reached this stage of his preparations when there came a timid knock at the door.

"Hold on! Who's there?" shouted Florian Mayr as with two great bounds he sprang to the door. Pushing back the bolt, he opened the door a little and peeped through the narrow crack. "Oh, it's you, Przewalski? Well, Prosit! Come in!" he cried in a tone that was not exactly overjoyed. A gentleman of medium height entered; his long havelock, gigantic soft hat, and long soft locks at once betrayed the artist.

The gentleman with the difficult name removed his hat, ran the fingers of his left hand through his soft dark mane, drew his drooping mustache through his

fingers in a melancholy manner to remove the melted frost, and finally, raising his tired eyes, brought himself to say in a wearied tone: "Good morning."

"What can I do for you? Won't you sit down?" said Mayr impatiently, pointing to the old lounge. "That is, you see, I'm just going out. How are you, Prosit, anyhow?"

"Thanks,—not at all well; nerves, nerves!" complained the Polish gentleman sleepily, as he passed the back of his hand over his high arched eyebrows. "Why do you always say 'Prosit' to me, dear friend?"

"Well, you see," answered Florian Mayr good-naturedly, "until I have succeeded in sneezing your name out properly, I'd rather say 'Prosit' for short. But of course I could say 'Gesundheit' if you prefer."

With an effort the Pole opened his fine languishing eyes wide and with gentle reproach in his voice which was always slightly nasal he drawled: "My dear friend, why make you always fun of me? If my name is for you too hard," (and he rolled his 'r' roundly), "call me by my first name. We are brothers in art."

"All right, what is your name?"

"But, dear friend, here is my card if you please. My name is Antonine—do not forget it always."

Florian took the card, regarded it on both sides with seeming astonishment, and with a peculiar twitching at the corners of his mouth replied after a pause: "Now just look at that, nothing but Antonine. I should certainly have labeled you with something ending in 'laus.'"

"Why, pray?"

"I can't help it—somehow or other you make a kind of 'lausy' impression on me. No offense, dear friend."

The handsome Pole looked up at his tall friend doubtfully and the tips of his mustache trembled slightly as if he were a trifle hurt.—“That’s meant for a joke, I suppose,” he said in a troubled tone and as Florian Mayr made no intelligible reply, he walked slowly over to the writing desk,—a highly polished roll-top affair known as a ‘cylinder-bureau’,—and stared irresolutely, almost gloomily, at the slips and strips of paper there. He breathed hard through his nose once or twice in a preparatory manner and asked: “What are you going to do here?” (The roll of the ‘r’ was always strongly marked.)

“Oh, I’ve gone into authorship a little,” answered Florian Mayr thoroughly delighted as he always was when he had brought a deserved rebuke home to the one who deserved it.

“Extraordinary,” said the Pole after a short pause, shaking his head. Then in a voice which seemed to be dying of weariness he read the inscriptions on the slips of paper: “Firstly: Fie for shame!” “Secondly: Ha! Thou art discovered!” “Thirdly: Silly goose!” “Fourthly: Blooming idiot!” “Fifthly: Caught!” “Sixthly: Old cow!” “Seventhly: Now will you be good!” “Eighthly: I’ve had enough of this!”

Florian appeared to be sorry for the helplessness of his friend Antonine, or was it a kind of inventor’s pride that made him communicative? At all events he condescended to explain. He placed one of the slips of paper in each of the eight little drawers of his desk and with the narrow strips he pasted the front of each drawer fast to the shelf above it. If now in his absence the curious landlady should open any one of the drawers, she must inevitably betray herself by the torn

paper strip and he would have the satisfaction of knowing that she must have read the flattering message placed in that particular drawer. When he had successfully accomplished the difficult task of pasting, Florian Mayr drew himself up proudly and triumphantly whispered: "Well, what d'ye say to that, Antonine Prositlaus? Jolly good trap, what? But d'ye know how I punished the whole lot of them a while ago for stealing my coffee all the time? I bought a quarter of a pound of rhubarb with my own good money and I mixed it carefully with half a pound of finely ground coffee. I tell you it worked to a charm! It was more fun than a goat! Every time I heard footsteps in the corridor and anxious whispers I stuck out my head and said: 'You're not feeling quite well, my dear madam, or my dear child, as the case might be.'"

Prositlaus smiled almost imperceptibly: "Extraordinary! Very funny! By the way, my dear friend, I wanted to ask you: can you lend me twenty marks?"

"Not just now, I'm sorry to say, but I've still a goodly supply of the health-coffee on hand, if you happen to need that. Excuse me, but now I really must go."

With this Florian Mayr plunged into his winter coat, put on his hat, and — placed the desk key in plain sight on top of the desk. He knew that Frau Stoltenhagen could not withstand that temptation. Such malice did Florian Mayr bear. Then he opened the door wide for his guest and with a significant wave of his hand said: "It has given me much pleasure —"

With a deep sigh Przewalski left the room. Mayr followed him, slamming the door, and shouted down

the back corridor: "Frau Stoltenhagen, I'm going now."

His soft hat drawn far down over his forehead and with the gloomy mien of a man really suffering, the noble Pole stiffly descended the stairs. But it was not in Mayr's nature to proceed so deliberately. "Really, I am in an awful hurry, excuse me!" he said, grabbing his silk hat by the brim, "Good-by, old man." And like a high-spirited boy he sprang down the stairs in gigantic bounds.

He heard his companion stumbling clumsily along behind him and calling to him with all the strength of his weak lungs. Whether moved by pity or by regret for his rather overdone rudeness, at all events he waited at the house door below.

Przewalski was wheezing when he caught up with him. "Please,—dear friend, doctor told me, I have fatty heart. Let me accompany you. I've nothing to do."

"All right," said Florian, but he set a pace which very soon forced the Pole to seize his arm and allow himself to be dragged along. He tripped on panting by the side of his long-legged companion for he could not afford to let the opportunity slip of renewing his request, since it was no easy matter to get hold of this Florian Mayr; he always had so much to do.

"You see, what I wanted to say," he began. "I need money. I haven't a penny in my pocket, can't get shaved to-day. Tell me, what does one do to get pupils at ten marks an hour in good families with pretty daughters?"

"But you've got means," retorted Mayr impatiently. "You have your sonatas printed at your own expense.

It takes money to do that! You are lodged like a count and eat at the best restaurants."

"Oh, I'm afraid you cannot understand the creative artist. Some comfort and luxury are necessary to inspiration. I have no inspiration when I eat sausage with garlic in it and drink beer. I can't compose when my trousers are torn and there are grease spots on my cravat. Wagner has to have yellow satin for his clothes-lining."

"Quite so," interrupted Florian laconically, "but then, you see, he is *the* Wagner."

"I know that," replied the other, tossing his head and smiling contemptuously, "but why may I not wake up some morning *the* Przewalski? The creative artist has a right to his artistic moods. I am a sensitive artist. I need luxurious surroundings, soft fabrics, soft cushions, soft colors; coarse foods give me indigestion."

"Why don't you eat soft eggs? They're cheap," retorted Florian, endeavoring to mock his friend's strong Slavic accent.

The sensitive artist, disregarding this friendly advice, continued eagerly: "I've had my latest sonata for piano and cello published,—you know,—dedicated to Grützmacher—cost me a month's income,—and what have I left? I must earn some money. You have so many pupils and you are so well paid. Couldn't you give up one wealthy family to me, with pretty daughters?"

"Have they really got to be pretty?"

"Of course. I'm not going to teach silly geese to play. I want to marry. That's a sacrifice that I'm willing to make for my art; I will sell myself. I'm

prepared to sell the *man* in order to rescue the creative artist."

Florian Mayr turned away to conceal the delighted grimace with which he gave vent to his feelings. Then, cordially pinching the fair Antonine's arm till he squealed pitifully, Mayr replied: "So you think that rich and pretty girls would take to the sensitive artist so easily?"

The Pole measured him with a look that was almost pitying. "But, my dear friend, I ought to know women! They can all be caught with sugar, a cat of a chambermaid as well as a princess, especially if they're musical. If I should tell you my adventures, you wouldn't believe me. The Countess Proskowski poisoned herself on my account and Prince Smirczicki wanted to fight a pistol duel with me. But I hadn't time; the next night I had to attend a concert in Warsaw where I conducted my symphony, opus 7. The Princess Smirczicki presented me with a laurel wreath. I can assure you, all the high aristocracy are at my beck and call. But one doesn't marry these ladies,—they're too likely to become inconvenient and cost more than they bring in. The daughter of some tradesman is better, with a few thousand marks or so. Don't you know something of that sort for me?"

"If you've no objections to a goose?"

"Certainly not, rather prefer it."

"And as unmusical as a pug dog?"

"Hm, if she isn't too tall and thin."

"No, not a bit of it, she's beautifully plump and rich and romantic too."

"Just the thing. Where does she live?"

"She's the only daughter of the wealthy Consul Bur-

mester in the Markgrafenstrasse. I'll give you a recommendation. The fact is, you'll do me a favor if you'll relieve me of giving her lessons. But here we are. This is my place and so farewell, old man," wherewith he just barely touched his hat and rang the bell of a house in the Roonstrasse before which they had stopped.

"Thank you, dear friend," answered the Pole. "A propos, can't you lend me ten marks? I really must get a shave."

"You can get that for ten pfennigs."

"My lord, my lord, you are a singular man! You don't understand the creative artist. Right in here," he said, tapping himself on the forehead, "Louis d'ors are to be had by the thousands and you won't lend me ten marks!"

Meanwhile the heavy oaken door had been unlatched and Florian Mayr braced his foot in the opening that it might not snap to again. Taking a ten mark piece from his pocketbook, he said: "There, if you please, my respected friend, till the first of the month, eh? when you receive the rents from your Polish estates. I haven't got it to spare either. Get a good clean shave."

Almost inaudibly Przewalski breathed his thanks through his nose, slipped the goldpiece into his waistcoat pocket, and gave his friend a parting handshake.

"The devil take him! It's like running a fox-brush through your fingers," growled Florian Mayr half aloud, and shaking his bared hand as if something disgusting had stuck to it, he ascended the well carpeted stairs of the aristocratic mansion.

The "sensitive artist," however, expressed himself

in Polish concerning his friend in much less flattering terms. He hated this rugged, uncompromising man and eagerly longed for a chance to revenge himself upon him for all the stinging jokes with which the rude fellow loved to torment him. He walked along slowly till he came to a barber shop where he got a shave for twenty pfennigs. From the barber's he went to the confectioner's and drank a cup of chocolate and ate some apple-cake with whipped cream on it, for he was a "sensitive artist" and loved soft things.

CHAPTER II

This Cursed Music

THE man-servant started to leave the bed-room of his master with the consul's shoes in his hand.

"Oh, Fritz, you might bring me the lamp with the green shade. I think I'll — it will be a quarter of an hour before tea is ready,—just fetch me the evening paper from my room. I think it's on the writing desk."

"Very well, sir."

The man disappeared and Consul Burmester, a portly little gentleman of some fifty years, took off his coat and threw himself with a deep sigh of relief into a low easy-chair in front of the stove, in which a freshly fed fire had just begun to crackle with renewed energy. The little gentleman polished with his silk handkerchief his bald head until it was so smooth that the flickering flames were reflected upon it. Then he ran all his ten fingers through the crown of thin, blond hair which clung to his cranium, and also through his close-cut beard. Then he took off his high stiff collar, stretched out his short fat legs, leaned far back and yawned. He yawned long drawn out, then staccato, then in tremolo, gliding slowly from the highest falsetto down to a more normal register. He yawned again and again, varying artistically the motive "oo — ah!": "oo — oh — ah — ah — ah — ooaiiaiaiaia — hooohooohooohoo — hoo!" Like a true disciple of the Sybarites he ex-

tracted from the yawn the fullest enjoyment with pedantic thoroughness, until at last he settled down with a short grunt of satisfaction and folded his hands over his round abdomen. He still held the collar, wilted with perspiration, between two fingers, and awaited thus the return of his servant.

At that same time the mistress of the house was also occupied in making herself comfortable for the evening meal.

Frau Olga Burmester's bed-room lay toward the front of the house, next the drawing-room. Whenever there was company she was accustomed to leave the folding doors between bed-room and salon wide open. She had heard that it was the fashion among the swell Parisian ladies to use the bed-room of the lady of the house as an additional reception-room, and, on "mi-graine" days and during other similar aristocratic indispositions, even to receive in the bed-room, which for this reason naturally took on the more intimate character of a boudoir. And as Frau Consul Burmester, *née* von Studnitzka, was much given to copying everything that was foreign and hence for Germany possessed the charm of the unusual, she had given much care and attention to the arrangement and decoration of her bed-room. The broad, very low canopy bed, a rare masterpiece of early German woodcarving, stood upon a carpeted dais, the walls on each side being concealed by large imitations of Gobelin tapestries, while the whole floor was covered with a thick Smyrna rug. The pillows were bordered with broad lace and lay on exhibition even in the daytime upon the coverlid of old-gold satin. The few chairs were also upholstered in old-gold satin. A handsome mirror reaching almost

to the ceiling, an extremely elegant dressing-table, and a fine commode of the baroque period completed the inventory, the washing table and other necessities being relegated to a small room at the side.

The mistress of all this elegance, attired in a negligée of white, was seated in an easy chair before the great mirror while her maid, kneeling in front of her, exchanged her shoes for a pair of elegant Turkish slippers.

"When did my daughter go to bed?" she inquired of the girl. "Do you know whether her headache is better?"

"I don't know, ma'am; I haven't seen Fräulein Thekla since eight o'clock. She was reading in the master's room."

"Reading? One doesn't read with a headache; I'll just go and see."

Frau Burmester rose quickly, gave another look into the mirror, hooked her loose gown together and left the bed-room hastily. She passed through the drawing-room and the dining-room, where the manservant was giving a last hand to the tea-table, over which she cast a cursory glance.

"Why three places, Fritz? My daughter has gone to bed."

The man tried in vain to suppress a smile and replied, "I just saw Fräulein Thekla in the study as I went to fetch the paper for the consul."

"Just now?" And Frau Burmester raised her head and regarded the grinning servant with astonishment. She knit her eyebrows. "Very well, I will see." And quickening her steps she proceeded by way of the back corridor to her daughter's room.

As soon as the mistress had gone, Marie, the pretty maid, appeared in the dining-room. Fritz went over and put his arm familiarly about her waist.

"I tell you, Fräulein Thekla'll catch it this time! She ought to have been in bed long ago, eh? I just saw her sittin' in the master's room with her fingers in her ears, like this, over that pink-covered book you lent her."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the maid in a low voice, as she freed herself from Fritz's embrace. "If Frau Burmester should catch her at it! I'd get a dose too!"

Fritz grinned maliciously. "You see, my little angel, what you get for it. What do you want to give a half-grown girl such an exciting book for anyway?"

"I was sorry for the poor girl. She's not allowed to do anything she likes to. Nothing but singing and playing the piano; it's enough to drive one mad. I'm sorry for her, she's such a nice girl. She never goes out either except to the fine concerts where you can't even get a glass of beer. A girl wants to see something more of life at her age."

"Of course, and especially about what you call falling in love is what she wants to know, hey?" said the teasing Fritz. "Well, I shouldn't wonder if you're right. I'm sorry for her myself. So young and pretty and the old lady after her every minute, for fear she'll have too much fun. I'd like to know how them kind of people got such a child as that."

"Fritz, you never will learn to speak properly. You must say *those kind*," said Marie, with a superior smile. "Well, I don't wonder that you wonder. I know something you don't."

"What might that be?"

"Think I'll tell you? You keep a secret! Haha!"

"Now you make me curious. Tell me, do! I'm as still as the grave, and it's a nice kiss you'll get from me too, Marie!"

"Oh, what a stupid! That would do me a lot of good! Let me go,—I'm busy!"

The pretty lass eluded adroitly the embrace of the amorous youth and ran from the room. For a few moments she stood out in the corridor by Thekla's door and listened. Right enough, there were sounds of sobbing and chiding within.

A few minutes later Frau Burmester came out, evidently agitated, with a pink-covered book in her hand, and swept through the hall into the bed-room of her husband. The consul still sat in his shirtsleeves, reading the evening paper by the light of the green-shaded lamp. He had spread out his colored silk handkerchief over his knees and the limp collar lay clasped round the little gentleman's fat thigh.

"Really, Willy!" cried his wife impatiently, as she closed the door behind her. Then she remained standing on the threshold and drew her slim figure up to its full, by no means inconsiderable height,—a living exclamation-point, the very spirit of disapproval made flesh (or rather skin and bones), a living picture in the door frame.

Herr Burmester let his paper sink with a sigh of resignation and peered up over his gold eyeglasses at his spouse.

"What's the matter, my dear? Is supper ready?"

"No," she replied, going towards him. "I must have a serious talk with you. But you would favor me very much if you would complete your toilet some-

what. You know I can't abide such slovenly bachelor habits."

"Oh Lord, all right!" replied the consul submissively, as he rose with a sigh. "Well, what's the important news? I thought I might be allowed ten minutes to read my paper in peace." And he buttoned on a clean collar and donned a smoking jacket.

His wife held out to him excitedly the pink-covered novel and said, "There, look at that! What do you think it is? Guess where I found it!"

The consul read the title on the cover in a tone of indifference: *Two Hundred Fathoms under the Earth, or, the Blood-Countess.*

"Well," he said, "what of it? It's a penny-dreadful that you probably unearthed in the kitchen pantry. Perhaps you regard it as one of my duties to call up the cook and make a scene!"

Frau Burmester subdued her voice to a hoarse whisper.

"That is the chosen literature of our daughter!" she gasped as she threw the pink book contemptuously upon the nearest table. "Thekla pretends to have a headache in order not to have to go to the concert with us, and while we think she's in bed she's devouring this atrocious stuff. She borrowed it from Marie. I caught her in her bed-room. She was trying to get undressed quickly so as to make believe she had gone to bed long ago, and just as I entered she was hiding the book under her pillow."

"Well, well, well!" murmured the consul, plunging his hands helplessly into his trousers pockets.

"Indeed! And that's all you've got to say? You don't seem to appreciate what this pleasing discovery

means. It's beginning to come out now, this tendency towards the vulgar; it is born in her — it is hereditary!"

"You say that in a tone as if it were my fault. She's not my child."

"I don't mean that, thank God!" replied Frau Olga, with a laugh that was almost a sneer.

The consul now began to get a little excited himself. He jingled the keys in his pocket and rocked nervously on his feet.

"Don't exaggerate, I beg of you," he cried reprovingly. "The child is gentle and good and affectionate, and if she has inherited no more criminal tendencies than a liking for trashy literature, I think we may be very well satisfied. Taste is capable of being educated. As for the rest, you will perhaps remember that the idea of adopting an absolutely strange child came from you. I myself wanted to take some poor relative into the house."

"I gave you the choice of half a dozen young girls in my own family alone," exclaimed Frau Olga in a tone of pique.

The consul retorted promptly, "None of them was particularly sympathetic to me, and besides you picked every one of them to pieces yourself. You absolutely would have a beauty and try to make a musical genius out of her. That's why you preferred the daughter of a vagabond musician and a pretty hotel chambermaid to all the legitimate children of both our families. And now you may bear the consequences yourself."

"What do you mean by that?" cried Frau Olga excitedly, her dark, apelike eyes flashing and full of fight. She sat down in the easy chair that the consul had oc-

cupied before and drummed with her fingers on the table.

"I have let you have your way, my dear," she proceeded acidly. "You think you can put me down with your ironical flings. That may be very amusing, but it seems to me that a serious question like this demands serious deliberation. You wash your hands in innocence, I suppose! I am to bear all the consequences alone. What do you really mean by that? Shall I look on with folded hands while the mother's nature gradually gains the supremacy in this child?"

"The mother made a very pleasing impression on me, and has become a good and respectable woman. The father seems somewhat more doubtful. He may have been a pretty bad sort — at all events we know nothing to the contrary."

"In any case he certainly was not given to reading penny-dreadfuls."

"But she surely gets her liking for servant-girls from him.— But, joking aside, haven't you perhaps neglected to provide her with good wholesome reading?"

"I? I have given her the choicest classic and modern works — but those weary her, of course."

"Of course!" repeated the consul with a laugh. "They unusually weary half grown children and us grown up people sometimes as well."

"You to be sure," sneered his wife. "Nothing can make up for the lack of a classic education. That is proved by you in the most convincing manner, my dear."

"You are extraordinarily kind, my dearest!"

Saying which the consul withdrew his hands from his trousers pockets and thrust them for a change into those of his coat. But he did so with an energy which betrayed a wound in a sensitive spot. He thrust out his thick under lip testily and strode up and down several times. Then he stopped in front of his wife and said, "We shall not get far in this way — I'll speak to Thekla myself."

Frau Olga turned up her nose. "Bravo! You have gradually talked yourself into just the right state of mind to make a tremendous impression on the young lady."

"I'll leave the impression-making all to you; that doesn't belong in any way to my principles of education. I love the child, I think I can say, as much as if she were my own. I hope that Thekla feels that, and if she does feel it she will listen to me. But please let me talk to her alone."

He opened the door and allowed his wife to pass out first.

Thekla Burmester was already waiting in the dining-room. As her parents entered, she rose, went to meet her father, and gave him her hand in an uneasy and embarrassed manner. He reassured her by giving it a hearty squeeze. She looked up and met his kindly eyes, and then betook herself to the place at table with a little sigh of relief.

Nevertheless the supper passed off in a somewhat subdued atmosphere, for Frau Burmester sat there, stiff and severe, and said hardly a word, and the consul did not care to touch in her presence on the subject that weighed upon their spirits. The meal was hurriedly

got through with. Then the servant was sent to light the lamp in the library and Thekla rose to say good-night to her parents.

"Just a moment please," said Herr Burmester. "I wish to speak to you, my child. Come to my room with me."

Without a word the young lady followed her fat little foster-father, her pretty round head with its two luxuriant dark blond braids drooping in conscious guilt, and her mouth twitching anxiously. By the time they had entered the consul's elegant and comfortable study and the door had closed behind them, the big child was already in tears.

The consul seated himself in his easy-chair and called Thekla to him. Then he took both her hands in his and regarded her with a smile of compassion. She was eighteen years old, rather tall and exquisite of figure, slender and yet gracefully rounded. She wore a simple skirt of brown cloth and a dark blue sailor blouse, much like those worn by boys, held at the waist by a leathern belt. Her pretty white neck flushed and her delicate little nose twitched, tears rolled down her cheeks, somewhat paled by too much home staying, while others threatened to fall from the dark, drooping lashes.

Herr Burmester felt his own heart touched when he saw the child weeping, and he found no better beginning to his fatherly admonition than the question,

"Was mamma really so very severe?"

Thekla nodded vigorously and then sobbed out with difficulty:

"Oh, papa — I'm really not — so bad! She said I — had — low instincts! The most terrible — crimi-

nals — all began that way — reading such books — she said!”

She wiped her nose, brushed the tears away, and continued more fluently.

“I really didn’t think there was anything so bad about it. A little while ago I went to call Marie for mamma and she didn’t hear me at all. She sat in her room and was reading *The Blood-Countess*, and when I called her she excused herself because she hadn’t heard me, and said *The Blood-Countess* was so awfully interesting that you couldn’t leave it alone if you once began it. And then I said she must lend it to me, because I’ve never read anything as interesting as that. I only began it this evening, because I didn’t have to go to the concert. I never have a chance any other time. And it was really just as exciting as Marie said. I didn’t notice at all how the time passed, I didn’t do anything else that was wrong. And that isn’t any low instinct, is it?”

The consul could not repress a smile. “Come here, my child, and sit down by me; we’ll have a sensible talk together.”

She dragged a chair up to his and sat down in front of him, her hands folded in her lap. Then he continued:

“You see, Thekla, in the first place it is hardly proper for the daughter of the house to borrow anything of the servants; and secondly a young lady who has had the benefit of a polite education should not care for backstairs literature of that kind, for that shows very bad taste. People of unstable character and particularly very young persons are really very easily spoiled by such trashy reading. In that your mother

is quite right. It would really be a blessing if society could be protected by law from such poisonous and dangerous stuff. It's a mixture of terrible secrets and appalling crimes, and the criminals are all made romantic heroes of. It poisons the imagination and incites to crime."

"But papa, you don't think I could ever do any of those things in *The Blood-Countess!*" interrupted Thekla in distress.

"No, dear heart, I am perfectly willing to believe that you won't overload your conscience with poisoning and burglary, but your idea of life and your taste will suffer, I'm sure, and that is bad enough. An educated person looks for truth in what he reads, for that is wholesome, and for beauty, for that elevates and ennobles. But let us drop the subject now. You'll promise me, won't you, to withstand in future the temptation to have anything to do with such stuff? That's right! And now I'll tell you what I think worse than all the silly horrors of *The Blood-Countess*. Till now I have always found you frank and truthful, my child. It would grieve me deeply if you should begin now to walk in crooked paths. Now I don't think it was right of you to-day to pretend to have a headache so as to be able to pore over your blood-and-thunder story instead of going to a good concert."

"But papa, I did really have a headache," protested Thekla eagerly. "When I practice so much I always get a headache, and when I sit through a long concert after that it makes me perfectly stupid."

Herr Burmester looked up in surprise. He had not been prepared for such a confession. He played with the tassels on the chair and resumed after a pause of

some duration, "Why, do you dislike music so much as that? Don't you know it's mamma's ambition to make a fine musician of you? And after all, even if you don't have to earn your living by it, it is always a good thing for a young lady to do something well in some field or other."

"Yes, papa, and I would like to do that too," replied Thekla. "I would so like to learn a lot and read good books and all that. All the girls of my acquaintance know much more than I do. But not one of them has to practice as I do. I really don't have time for anything else. I've got to take singing lessons too, and my voice is as thin as a thread. And practicing on the piano makes me so awfully tired; I always feel utterly worn out after practicing. The keys all keep hammering on my head, so that I often have a feeling as if it were quite soft, as if I only had to press a little with my finger to bore a hole in it. And at night I dream such horrible things. Our piano stands there like a big black coffin, and then the top is raised a little, and through the crack creep hundreds of note-heads with arms and legs on them. They all have hammers on their backs and they run after me and try to strike me. Then I have to jump out of bed in my night-gown and run out into the street and run and run in the black night, and the wind shrieks so terribly. And I hear all the notes sounding as they run after me. And they scream, 'Don't you see I've got a flat in front of me, you goose?' And another one shrieks, 'I'll throw my sharp at your head if you play C-natural again!' Oh, darling papa, you can't imagine how terrible it is! Just fancy, the notes all have the voice of Herr Mayr when they scream at me.

And besides Herr Mayr stands behind them and commands them and sets them onto me! I'm so afraid of Herr Mayr!"

"My poor child, what extraordinary ideas!" exclaimed the consul in alarm. He rose, drew the young girl to him, and stroked her thick soft hair. For some time he held her so without speaking. Then he took her head in both hands, kissed her on forehead and cheek, and said, "Go to bed now, my pet, and don't excite yourself with such morbid fancies. I'll have a talk with mamma. We must make it easier for you, I can see that. You must not get ill on account of that curs — I mean blessed music!"

"You're so good, papa, you'll help me, won't you?" pleaded Thekla. Then she allowed herself to be pushed gently out of the room.

As soon as she was gone Herr Burmester became red in his face, raised both hands on high, and spoke in a low but distinct voice the word he had suppressed in Thekla's presence:

"This cursed music!" During the few minutes in which his persecuted and frightened child was crying herself out upon his shoulder his whole life passed before him in memory. His father had founded the firm in Lübeck and gradually raised it from its original modest proportions to the rank of one of the most important among the houses of world-wide fame in his native city. But Wilhelm Burmester cherished but few pleasant memories of his early home. A foolish marriage contracted by the elder Burmester in youth with a girl of no very gentle character, who was not only commonplace and illbred but incapable of improvement, had embittered his whole life. He became a mere beast

of burden. He was a hard master and a strict father. It thus came to pass that Wilhelm Burmester never enjoyed the best part of a good bringing-up, the pure, peaceful, sabbath atmosphere that a harmonious married life sheds upon home and family. In this way, he, too, became an every-day sort of man and a mere beast of burden, like his father.

When in after years he came to recognize why it was that no real happiness could be looked for in his father's house, he promised himself to avoid a hasty marriage as he would the cholera. But, from pure fear of allowing himself to be carried away by his feelings, all capability for deep feeling died in him. He was an old young man and had become a power in the commercial world before he made up his mind to enter into a marriage of reason and convenience. To preserve and increase the prestige which his wealth and the solidity of his firm gave him, he needed a wife chosen from the really best circles, who was a mistress of etiquette and who possessed enough intelligence to make the house over which she presided the resort not only of the usual run of diners-out but of cultivated society. And so he married a well-bred young lady, no longer young, of noble family but poor. There was no question of love on either side; but he considered that he was entitled to her eternal gratitude for placing her in circumstances where she could develop brilliantly her social talents and satisfy her penchant for a life of luxury. His wife had never been pretty, but, in spite of her deep-set eyes and extreme gauntness, she made a very aristocratic impression. She dressed in excellent taste and understood so well how to get such original effects out of the arrangement of her luxuriant,

nearly black hair that, when dressmaker and hairdresser played successfully into each other's hands, she even passed for rather an interesting personality. And after all what right had he to expect beauty? He was perfectly conscious of being a very uncomely, fat little fellow himself. All in all he was quite satisfied with the result of his marriage, as long as he still lived in Lübeck actively engaged in business. After five years of clever manipulation, however, she succeeded in bringing him to the point of retiring from the firm in favor of a nephew who had long shared his confidence, and of removing to Berlin with the title of Consul of Uruguay.

She certainly understood how to secure a firm footing in the best circles of the capital and to give her home, an atmosphere commensurate with their position, but the consul himself was the victim of this social elevation. The musical predilections of his wife were the key that had unlocked for them the doors of patrician society. She never failed to attend a musical function and the most celebrated virtuosi shared the hospitality of her home. In this way she attracted society to her house. And the poor consul, though unmusical to an extreme degree, was dragged ruthlessly from concert to concert, and was forced to bow down before all kinds of music folk of both sexes, no matter how stupid or vain they might be; to affect enthusiasm where his only feeling was one of yawning ennui; and to make friends with people with whom he had absolutely nothing in common. As he had nothing whatever to do, it was impossible to find an adequate excuse for shirking the duties with which his wife weighted him down, and when once in a while, in a fit of desperation, he did

cross the dead line of social routine, she punished him with cold contempt, and made him feel that he had ceased to be a factor in her scheme of existence. It followed that, as he shunned the ridiculous rôle of a marital zero, and did not care to be taken for a simpleton, he took up his burden of martyrdom again and went on playing the hypocrite, as his wife demanded.

It was at the time of their removal to Berlin that they had adopted the orphan girl. Thekla was thought in society to be a legitimate daughter of the house. Herr Burmester did not contradict this supposition, for he was proud of the comely girl, and loved her for her simplicity and goodness of heart. The child had become his very own through love and he gloried in his fatherhood. She should not be haled along that road of thorns over which he had dragged his tired and heavy limbs. Her plaintive lament had frightened him out of his indolent indifference. The child was right; he knew exactly how she felt. Why of course! It can't help making one stupid and dull. And the consul clinched his fist again and hissed through his teeth,

“This cursed music!”

CHAPTER III

Herr Mayr Forgets Himself

THE next morning brought to Frau Burmester a great surprise. She had always regarded her husband as an early riser, for he rose every day punctually at eight o'clock, however late he might have been up the night before, whereas her ladyship's rising hour was, according to the state of her nerves, anywhere from nine till noon. To-day she had had her cocoa,—she always used nourishing beverages, not having as yet relinquished the hope of growing stouter, — at nine o'clock, intending, however, to counteract the possible evil effects of last night's excitement by lying abed an hour or two longer.

Just as she was moistening her lips with a dainty napkin to remove the traces of cocoa and a soft egg, her husband entered, fully equipped for the street, and announced his intention of taking an extended walk in the Thiergarten in Thekla's company.

"Thekla can't go with you to-day," replied his wife coldly, as she readjusted the pillow, with which she had propped herself up for breakfasting purposes, and stretched herself at full length in the bed. "You have forgotten, dear Willy, that at eleven o'clock Herr Mayr is coming to give her a music lesson."

"We shall be back by eleven."

"But you know very well that Thekla has to practice finger exercises for an hour before she takes her

lesson. What can Herr Mayr do with her if she comes to the piano with stiff fingers?"

"I don't care anything about that," retorted the consul with unwonted decision. "It's my opinion the girl will go to her tasks fresher and more collected if she doesn't tire herself out beforehand. Besides I don't care anything about that either. What difference does it make whether Thekla plays the piano better or worse to-day or any other day? The main thing is to look after her health and see that she isn't pushed too hard."

"Good gracious, what sort of way is that to talk?" cried Frau Olga in wide-eyed astonishment, raising herself in bed with a sudden jerk. "I thought it was understood between us that her artistic education was to be left entirely to me."

"Oh, bah! artistic education! That's a fool phrase!" growled the consul angrily. "When one party to a marriage contract treats the child unreasonably and the other party perceives it, it becomes his duty, damme, to resist the first party and to the best of his ability see to it that no serious harm is done. It was wrong of me not to trouble myself more about Thekla's education. Now I'm going to try to make up for it. So I bid you good morning, my dear Olga!"

The little man waved his hat imperiously in the direction of his wife and, before her indignation could find words, hastily left the room. She had a great mind to spring out of bed, throw on a wrapper, run after her rebellious husband, and, if possible, tear Thekla from him before they could get safely outside the door, but the thought of making herself ridiculous in the eyes of the servants by a scene of that sort restrained

her. Reaching out for the knob of the electric bell which hung at her head, she pressed the white button furiously and as the maid did not appear instantly she continued to ring, scarcely pausing for a second in her excitement.

Marie came rushing in in a great fright, bringing a wet cloth, for she was sure her mistress must have spilled the cocoa over the satin coverlet.

"Call my daughter back, I wish to speak to her," shrieked Frau Burmester, before the maid had a chance to ask what was wanted.

"Fräulein Thekla has been gone some time," replied Marie. "She went out first and waited for master outside."

It cost the lady no little effort to restrain an explosion of wrath in the presence of the maid. She bade Marie remove the breakfast things. When she was alone she laid about her in a rage, gesticulating wildly, and the way she laughed was not exactly amiable. "It's incredible! This fat little Willy Burmester! All of a sudden starting up to play a part! Makes Thekla rebel against me! Who would have believed it? But they're afraid of me all the same, both of them, the heroes! He runs away without giving me a chance to speak and she runs off down the street so that I shan't bring her back. Just wait! I don't think they'll play such tricks very often. It's really too bad! I'd scarcely slept off the excitement of last night a little and here they have to worry me sick again in the early morning!"

The morning nap was now out of the question. After all it was better to get up at once and courageously face the world in its early morning aspect and

see how the peaceful home looked after the declaration of war.

Promptly, as usual, at eleven o'clock Herr Florian Mayr appeared for the music lesson. Frau Burmester received him in the drawing-room.

"I regret deeply, my dear Herr Mayr, that you will have to wait a moment," she said as she rustled towards him in her costly, heavy morning gown. "My husband has run off with our Thekla. He claims that it is better for the health to take a walk than to practice the piano."

"There's no doubt about it whatever, he's quite right," broke in Florian Mayr laughing, as he complied with her mute invitation to be seated.

Frau Burmester placed herself opposite him on the sofa and went on without noticing his interruption! "My husband, I'm sorry to say, is not musical enough to be able to assist me in the artistic education of our daughter. Why, actually, like the business man that he once was, he is accustomed to look upon the arts as agreeable but idle superfluities — that is, so long as one doesn't make a living by them. It is impossible for him to perceive that even the dilettante who intends to accomplish anything worth while must work with earnestness and determination. You can easily understand that my daughter is most ready to follow that one of us who promises to make life easiest for her. In a young girl that is natural. But I am very glad of this opportunity, my dear Herr Mayr, to speak with you alone. I have long wanted to urge you to treat my daughter with proper severity. She is too apt to let herself go if she is not held strictly to account. So please pay no heed to the fact that she is a young girl of good family,

who is not obliged to do this, but simply treat her like any other pupil, who is under the necessity of achieving something and who must therefore be kept more firmly in hand than those who are perhaps more industrious by nature or who learn more readily. Will you promise me this?"

The pianist did not reply at once. He smiled quietly and regarded his long bony fingers. At last he spoke: "Do you know, madam, this is the first time I have ever been asked to be more strict? In fact I am generally known as a regular brute and it's pretty much the same to me whether I'm dealing with a fine young lady or a stupid boy. If I find talent in a pupil, I take the matter seriously and demand the greatest application. But now that we're on the subject, I'm really sorry for your daughter."

"How so? What do you mean?"

"Well, to be frank, in my opinion the young lady hasn't enough talent to bear my sharpest key. I think the consul is right. Let her take her walks and never play the piano any longer than she wants to. She won't get much further than she is now any way and even if she did — it won't amount to anything much at best."

Frau Burmester stiffened up and looked much annoyed. With a forced smile she replied: "Oh, Herr Mayr, it seems to me you go too far. Thekla is so young, her character is still too undeveloped to — Besides you, too, are still young; I don't know but you judge somewhat too hastily. You will pardon me, — I believe experience may in the future teach you that even in art talent and temperament are not the only final tests and that unremitting industry and earnest application can make up for much."

"Well, madam, if you think I don't know anything about that —"

"Pardon me, Herr Mayr," interrupted Frau Burmester, rising quickly. "I hear steps outside, I think they have returned, excuse me." She bent her head slightly towards him and rushed out of the door.

Florian Mayr remained alone. With a superior smile he looked after the lady of the house and then with his forefinger traced upon his high forehead a significant cross. In the next room he heard excited whispers. He gave a short laugh; then, seating himself at the piano, he opened it and in long drawn chords began to improvise. A few minutes later Thekla entered. He pretended not to notice her and dashed into one of the most difficult of Liszt's études which just at that time he was studying. Thekla stood a few paces behind him and listened. Suddenly he wheeled about on the piano-stool and with kindly good nature laughed in her face: "Well, Fräulein, so there you are."

She began to make excuses but he stopped her short. "Know all about it. Now we shall see for once how you can play the piano when you have red cheeks. I've never seen you with red cheeks before, Fräulein Burmester." He resigned his seat to her and drew up a chair. The red on Thekla's cheeks deepened. She never could quite make out what Herr Mayr meant. It all sounded so ironical. Was he angry, too, like her mother, who had just treated her to a curtain lecture condensed in whispers? She brought out her music, laid it on the rack, and adjusted the piano-stool. Herr Mayr stood beside her with folded arms, gazing steadily at her with an ironical smile. She did not know which way to look. She sat down, her heart beat-

ing fast, took off her rings, smoothed her skirt over her lap, and at last said very shyly: "Oh, Herr Mayr!"

"What's the matter? Don't you feel well?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. But I shall never learn to play like you."

"Right you are," he laughed. "So let's begin. Play as badly as you like. I'll do my part later." And again he laughed ambiguously.

She began to play a mazourka of Chopin, timidly, colorless in expression, uncertain in time, badly phrased, and constantly striking false notes, especially in the bass. What was the meaning of this? Perhaps Herr Mayr was not paying attention. Never before had he allowed the slightest slip to pass without shouting at her. She ventured to glance furtively around at him. Good gracious! There he still sat, smiling roguishly, with such a funny expression in his small brown eyes.

This was really the first time that Florian had ever observed his pupil with close attention. These wellbred maidens of good family whom he instructed for from five to ten marks an hour had always been objects of complete indifference to him. They had no charm for him because he had never been able to discover behind their soft smooth little masks any individuality at all. Consequently he simply divided these estimable young daughters of the well-to-do into three classes: piano geese, singing geese, and painting geese. That was the end of them for him. But since his talk with Frau Burmester this little maiden suddenly appeared to him in a new light. Here was the unfortunate victim of a mother's misdirected zeal and he could not help thinking how only a few days ago out of pure whim and

impatience he had promised his wishy-washy Polish associate, Prositlaus, to let him have this poor little sacrificial lamb as easy prey. The girl was really very pretty. There was something touching about her tender beauty enhanced by the striking contrast between her almost ripe buxom young womanhood and her child-like expression of worry and timidity. Why should the poor thing have to play the piano, he thought to himself. If she sleeps well and has a good digestion and goes for her walks and gets red cheeks, why then she will be something delightful to look upon. And to pass peacefully through the world an edifying sight for harassed humanity, that of itself is not an unworthy mission in life.

Thekla had finished her mazourka. She let her hands fall into her lap and with a look of anxious inquiry glanced shyly around at her stern teacher.

Florian Mayr shook his smooth mane, scratched himself whimsically behind the ear, and said: "Well, Fräulein Burmester, I suppose I've got to say something. It was abominably bad." He put his hand upon her arm, pushed her energetically from the piano-stool, and taking her place, played the mazourka through for her. That of course sounded quite different, free in tempo but strict in rhythm. One could actually hear the beat of the boots with their clinking spurs and the marvelously graceful and piquante Chopinesque *fioriture* dropped lightly from his fingers like pearls or tripped like many-colored mottos over the flowing, glistening ribbon of the melody.

"That's the way that thing sounds," he said severely when he had finished. Then he made place for her again. He was no longer smiling. In playing that

deep earnestness with which he treated everything relating to his art had come upon him again.

Thekla drew a deep sigh. Then, summoning all her courage, she attacked the keys with energy. Alas! Two false notes in the first chord. Herr Mayr cried out in pain. But Thekla was not to be driven out of her dare-devil mood. Away she thundered, treading the pedal as if it were a helpless old cur and she a bad old man venting his evil humors upon it. Faster and faster grew the tempo, the phrasing more obscured, the outrageous mistakes more and more frequent.

"Wrong! C-sharp! Damnation! *Piano!* Thunder and lightning! Now *crescendo!* My God! Stop, stop! You're making a beastly mess of it." But let the fierce Herr Florian shout and rage as he would, Fräulein Thekla was not to be stopped. Fräulein Thekla had gone mad.

Now Herr Mayr was angry in earnest. Was she making game of him, the silly fool? She had better drop that sort of thing. "Stop!" he roared again. "Or I'll —"

She did not hear him; she banged away. Her delicate nostrils were distended, her breath came fast, her cheeks faded from deep red to white.

But Florian's patience was now exhausted and — biff! — there was a slap on her left hand that fairly burned.

With a little frightened cry Thekla swung round; she rubbed her left hand with her right and gazed in terror at her enraged teacher.

The shameless fellow bent over her, his teeth set, and with a "piff, paff, take that!" his hard bony well-

directed paws descended with a rush upon her warm soft little paddies.

Poor frightened Thekla in her first surprise did not seem to comprehend that she was being struck. Not until she had received a good half-dozen blows, did she awake from her stupefaction. She sprang to her feet and ran to the door, sobbing aloud. "Papa, papa," she cried. "Herr Mayr is striking me!"

It was now Master Florian's turn to open his eyes in astonishment. It was of a sudden borne in upon him that he had behaved in a most unseemly manner. He, too, sprang up and, running after the weeping girl, tried to soothe her, to beg her pardon, or even to scold her for crying so childishly.

Thekla probably thought that he was going to strike her again, for she gave a shrill cry of terror and rushed out of the room.

At the same moment the consul summoned by his daughter's clamor reached the door of the drawing-room and, close upon his heels, came his wife, her face red and her eyes snapping, for the girl's cries for help had interrupted her in the midst of a bitter altercation with her husband. Thekla took refuge on her father's breast, threw both arms about his neck, and, sobbing loudly, uttered once more her indignant complaint: "Papa, Herr Mayr struck me!"

"What's that? I must have misunderstood," stutted the little man in confusion as he pushed Thekla gently aside and stepped across the threshold. His shiny bald head became for a moment a dark red and he looked up menacingly at the tall thin piano teacher who stood close before him, his head bowed with shame.

"Answer me, Herr Mayr, did you really forget yourself so far as —"

"I can only beg you to forgive me, sir," stammered Mayr in confusion, running the fingers now of one hand now of the other through his hair. "Please don't be offended. I don't know how it was myself; my hand must have slipped or something; it was only a slap or two as we say."

Behind her father's back Thekla held out her red swollen hands to her mother and before the consul's indignation could find further words, Frau Burmester crossed the threshold and cried: "Is it possible! You have dared to lay hands upon my child?"

Herr Mayr looked up and answered defiantly: "Oh, it's you, is it, madam? It was your own wish that I should treat your daughter with the utmost severity. If you are not suited —"

"What, Olga? Did you tell him that?" and Herr Burmester turned upon his wife in an outburst of wrath.

The lady forgot herself. "I?" she screeched. "Better and better! By this time I suppose I'm to blame for everything." And turning to Herr Mayr: "Do you mean to say that I gave you permission to maltreat my child?"

"No one maltreats the child but you yourself," burst out Herr Mayr. "Yes, and I want you to know it. I wanted to tell you so before. It's a sin, an outrageous crime, the way you persecute your daughter with this piano playing. The girl doesn't want to play and she hasn't any talent. She's just about as musical as my boot here. Let her go walking and get red cheeks; that's much more sensible. A good, pretty,

attractive girl has a lot of things to learn that'll do her a great deal more good. Why should she be compelled to bungle art? Now you've got my opinion."

"We haven't asked your opinion," cried Frau Burmester in a rage. "And if you don't know how to behave yourself in respectable houses —"

"Yes,—of course," interrupted her husband. "I'll pay your stipend for the last month and then I must request you —" He pointed towards the door.

"Certainly,—of course," agreed Herr Mayr, nodding assent. At the same time his glance passed over the head of the little man and he fastened his brown eyes full of sympathy upon Thekla who during the altercation had crept into a remote corner of the salon and there sat awaiting with curious anxiety the outcome of the scene.

"Yes,—and —of course we shall engage another teacher," added the consul somewhat hesitatingly.

"No, sir, I beg your pardon, that's by no means a matter of course," retorted Herr Mayr. "In fact that is totally barred."

"What, you take the liberty —"

"Yes, I take the liberty." With three long strides Master Florian was at Thekla's side and seizing her hands so quickly that she had no time to prevent him he held them both in his own powerful left and stroked them gently with his right. "My poor dear young lady, please, please, don't be angry with me any longer. You see, you drove me fairly wild with your miserable, murderous, beastly playing; but I behaved like a brute. Please make up with me. I promise you solemnly and cross my heart: I'll watch over you and see to it that nothing so low-down as a music teacher ever dares

come near you again. So long as I'm on hand, you'll never have to take another piano lesson, sure as my name is Florian Mayr."

"Oh," sighed Thekla softly. Still half in doubt, half in childlike trust, she raised her large eyes to her stern master and a charming smile flitted across her tearstained face. She resisted no longer but allowed him to hold her hands which he stroked and pressed.

"Let my daughter alone! I forbid you to touch my child!" cried the consul's lank consort, striding with royal mien towards the pair and thrusting her hand imperiously between them.

The consul clinched his fist, shook his head, and laughed ironically: "Well, now, see here, Herr Mayr, I'm really a bit curious to know how you would do that. You would prevent us from having our daughter take music lessons? Ha, ha, ha, that's altogether too good!"

Florian whirled about on his heel and laughed benignly in the consul's face. "That's a fact, ha, ha, it is good, why it's great! And my advice to you is, don't try it. I'm sure to hear of it if you let any respected colleague of mine into your house with a view to having him give lessons. I shall lie in wait and when I catch him I'll give him such a drubbing that he'll have to go and thank you for it — and if it were a professor from the High School — ha, ha! In that case I should take great satisfaction. Sir, I have the honor. Madam, I wish you a very good day. Tell me, Fräulein Thekla, you're not angry with me now, are you?"

"Oh, no, indeed, Herr Mayr."

And with a comprehensive though somewhat awkward bow, Master Florian marched out of the room.

Herr and Frau Burmester stared at each other speechless. Thekla was radiant.

As usual a half dozen bounds brought Florian Mayr to the foot of the stairs. Outside the street door, he stopped to breathe a moment. The incident had excited him a little after all. The poor girl! Lord above! The fool parents plagued her absurdly with things for which she was in no way fitted and on top of all that he had beaten her! "God knows, I *am* a brute!" he growled to himself half aloud. He gave his silk hat a push that tipped it a little forward and lent it a melancholy air. Then he stalked down the street. On the stand of a delicatessen shop he noticed some fresh oranges, a rarity at this season of the year. He went in and demanded half a dozen. They were very dear. He swore but he bought them. Then he went on and turned into the Jägerstrasse. At Treu & Nuglisch's he stopped again, gave his hat a flip in front so that it sat on the back of his head and once more denounced himself for a brute. Thereupon he entered the shop and purchased a flask of fine perfume. He now retraced his steps to the Markgrafenstrasse and the house of Consul Burmester. He mounted the stairs four steps at a time and rang the bell as humbly as any beggar. The servant opened.

"Look here, my dear fellow," said Mayr in a mysterious whisper. "Will you just do me the favor to call the maid? I've something to say to her in confidence."

Fritz grinned and departed and, sure enough, in a little while Marie appeared. In the meantime Florian

not without a gentle sigh had extracted a thaler from his purse. With this in his hand to give her confidence he beckoned: "I say, Marie, pst!"

"Oh, Herr Mayr, no, is it really you?"

"Pst! Look here, if you'll give these things to Fräulein Thekla without letting her father and mother know, this thaler is yours. Understand?" With these words he deposited first of all the thaler, then the bag of oranges, and finally the bottle of perfumery in the hands of the maid.

"But, Herr Mayr, I don't really know —"

"Give me back the thaler, you — you, lambkin, you!"

"All right, all right, I'll 'tend to it," snickered the maid. "Is there any message?"

"A right hearty greeting, that's all. And — you — listen, Marie. If they get a new music teacher, you just let me know right away, will you? Fräulein Thekla knows my address. You'll be no worse off for it. Understand?"

"Why, of course, Herr Mayr."

"That's all right; so that's settled. A right hearty greeting." He nodded to the girl, winked knowingly, and took himself off.

It occurred to him on the way home that he had promised his Polish friend a position in Consul Burmester's house. Florian was a scrupulously conscientious man. What he had promised he was accustomed faithfully to fulfill. But in this case he did not stop to think very long. He decided to break his word and at once gave himself absolution in the reflection that it would only be driving out Satan with Beelzebub if he should give this poor good stupid child, instead of a

teacher who only beat her, one who even wanted to marry her. "She may be a goose," he meditated, "but for the noble Pan Prositlaus I think after all she is too good. I'll look about in military circles; perhaps I can find a lieutenant —"

He went home and wrote a postal card to Herr Antonine Prezewalski, composer, informing him that unfortunately he was unable to recommend him to Consul Burmester because Fräulein Burmester was not going to take music lessons any longer. Conscious of having done a good deed, he fell into a sunny philanthropic mood. He lighted a cigar and paid Frau Stoltenhagen a visit in the kitchen.

"Well, my good woman, how do you do to-day?" he inquired most affably. "Doing well? Really? Why, I'm glad. You've seemed to me so depressed of late. Yes, yes, to be sure, a little piece of paper like that does tear so easily. Why, what's the matter? You are quite flushed. Let me recommend Mayr's health coffee; it is excellent for that sort of congestion. A good conscience and normal digestion, that's what maintains the equilibrium of body and soul. Fix that firmly in your mind, Frau Stoltenhagen, and you will find that life will appear to you as accommodating and convenient as a chest which any key will fit. No more excitement and no more disagreeable surprises. — Good morning, Fräulein Frieda,— By the way, if you ever wish to marry, don't fail to insert an advertisement in the newspapers. With newspapers discretion is always a matter of honor. Do you know what discretion is? No? You don't know that? I've known for a long time that you didn't know that. Well, good day, ladies. I wish you an excellent appetite."

CHAPTER IV.

Herr Mayr Wants to Forget Himself Again

NEXT morning when Master Florian returned from giving his lessons, he found two letters awaiting him. One was a dainty, exquisitely perfumed missive on pale-blue paper, the first glance at which indicated a young lady as its writer. Florian opened it with curiosity and read:

"My dear Herr Mayr:

Please accept my best thanks for your kind attention. I know of course that a well brought up young lady should not accept presents from gentlemen, unless from relatives or perhaps a *fillipeen*, but as you are my teacher, I must not be unmannerly. Besides, I shall have eaten up all six oranges by this evening and then they will be gone. The perfumery is so easy to hide, and I shall always smell of it when I think of you, and that will surely be very often, because I am so thankful to you, knowing well enough that I have no talent at all, and you, dear Herr Mayr, were the first to tell that to Mamma right out. But it will not do any good after all, for Mamma will not believe that I have no talent, and insists on my continuing to take lessons. I am not angry with you at all, dear Herr Mayr, for I was really awfully stupid in my lesson, and I am sure you did not mean to do it and would not do it again, or I should be too frightened to play at all. I always was afraid of you because you were so strict, but now I would not be afraid any more, because I know you only mean well by me. Papa is not so very angry with you

any more either. He even laughed — of course after Mamma had gone out of the room. He thinks you were right after all, but he is afraid that you will be still less able than he to prevent Mamma from employing a new teacher, if she really wants to. Because there are such a lot of piano-teachers and you could not possibly thrash them all, and I think so, too. How then are you going to prevent my taking any more lessons? Please write me to Th. B., Poste restante, Post Office No. 7, because Mamma would surely not allow you to write me. Thank you once more most cordially, I remain,

Your obedient pupil,

THEKLA BURMESTER,

P. S. Marie was delighted with her thaler."

Florian laughed aloud as he read this engaging little missive.

"You are a jolly good sort!" he shouted as he came to the end, and then with quiet satisfaction he read it through once more from the beginning.

He folded the two closely written pages together and gently caressed the smooth paper. Then he seated himself at his writing-desk, and, as he was not provided with the wherewithal to carry on a polite correspondence, he took a sheet of common note paper and wrote as follows in his large angular hand:

"My dear young lady:

Your delightful letter has really lifted a stone from my heart. I am the one who should be thankful that, in spite of my outrageous behavior of yesterday, such an amiable young lady as you should ever care to look at me again, and the more so as she is good enough to forgive me everything and gives me the right to continue to take an interest in her affairs.

In regard to the possible candidates for the vacant position as music-teacher, your father is not altogether wrong, as I could hardly thrash them all. But I would like to pound a few of them to a pulp. Do not fear, I will find a way all right to frighten the gentry off. And if everything else fails I would rather run away with you and have you taught the sewing machine at my expense than see you maltreated so without rhyme or reason.

But as you will hardly care very much about being abducted by me, I must ask you not to submit to everything they do to you, but to assist my efforts in your behalf by getting your own back up a little. I have had so many sad experiences with unreasoning parents that I make bold to assert, that it is the duty of good children to make up for the mistakes of their parents. Do not fail to let me know immediately if danger threatens, and I will come to your assistance, with which I remain,

Your ever devoted,

FLORIAN MAYR."

He put the letter in an envelope, which he addressed, and was making preparations to go out and post it, when his eye fell upon the second letter, which he had in the meantime quite forgotten. He tore it open impatiently and read:

"My dear Sir:

Our Peter Gais has just completed his new music-drama, 'Satan!' It is the majestic prelude to the sublimely conceived tetralogy, 'Man,' the creation of which will represent in all probability the culmination of his titanic labors, the coronation of the mighty genius of our demoniac Peter Gais. Confidently assuming that you, too, worthy brother in art, are in close sympathy with the growth and development of the inspired tone-poet, I take

the liberty of cordially inviting you to attend the first performance of 'Satan' by its creator, which will take place in my rooms to-morrow evening at seven.

With the deepest respect,

RAPHAEL SILBERSTEIN."

"Lord, children, don't fill your mouths quite so full!" growled Florian with a shake of the head. Nevertheless he sat down and wrote a postcard, accepting the invitation with thanks. He was not personally acquainted with the demoniac, inspired, titanic Peter Gais, but he knew that his opus 1 had attracted the attention of Liszt, and several symphonic poems that he had heard aroused in him a desire to meet the man.

Florian went out and dropped both letter and postal card in the letter-box. He was in such good spirits that, instead of his frugal luncheon and his glass of bad Berlin beer, he treated himself on this occasion to a small bottle of wine, and even that, though Lord knows in what fiendish witch's kitchen the stuff was brewed, did not avail to destroy his good humor. As he drank the last glass of the poisonous red liquid he read for the third time the pale-blue note. It was pleasant to have won such a good, trusting little heart by a manly act. Won? No, he took the strong expression back the instant it occurred to him. For the present it was only a feeling of gratitude. That was quite enough, too, for the little he had done. And he had never been partial to amorous adventures, at least not since his school days in Bayreuth, when a romantic love-affair with a brewer's daughter had ended in disappointment and bitterness, for, just as he graduated

from the high school, the youthful lady suddenly changed her mind and married an official, subaltern it is true, but yet the possessor of a regular salary. Since that time no feminine being had ever gained any influence over his inner life. He was no man for women and women were nothing to him. His female acquaintances consisted exclusively of landladies, conservatory girls, and other "piano geese," and all three of these categories were as wormwood to his soul, excepting indeed when he chose to take them from the humorous side, a process that in itself deprived even the most fascinating among them of all danger. That afternoon found him again at his piano, playing the Liszt études with his customary ardor, and his usual healthy sleep was not disturbed that night by intrusive dreams of any description.

The next morning came a second pale-blue note. It read:

"Dear Herr Mayr:

What will you think of me for writing you so soon again, but I am so unhappy and don't know what to do, and have no other friend but you. Mamma has engaged a new teacher for me after all. He was here this morning. He said that he heard Mamma was looking for a teacher for the uncommonly talented daughter of the house; he did not as a general rule give piano lessons, as he was a 'creative artist,' but he would regard it as an honor to make an exception in this case, as it was a question of a family whose sincere devotion to music was so well known in musical circles throughout the capital. Hitherto he had only taught a number of Russian princesses, on whose estates he had spent years as an honored guest. Then I had to play him something. I played

very much worse than I ever did for you, but still he found that I had a very *remarkable talent!* I had been spoiled by a *thoroughly wrong method!* Mamma said I have been taking lessons of you. Then he said you were nothing but a wood-chopper and not a pianist. You had no soul and no understanding for the creative artist. In musical circles you were never called anything else but *Strong-Mayr*, and you had been sued for calling an old lady a 'silly goose' and an 'old cow'! When you were not working you amused yourself by mixing some sort of stuff with your landlady's coffee so that she and all her family got so ill that they had to send for the doctor!

Dear Herr Mayr, I am firmly convinced that every bit of that is just as big a lie as that I have any talent. Please help me if you can. The teacher's name is Antonine Przewalski. Mamma liked him very much and engaged him at once. He played one of his own compositions too. I suppose I don't understand much about it, but I thought it was horrible; as you used to say: 'snail pudding with raspberry syrup!' And when he plays, he wheezes and snorts through his nose. My father was not at home but he could hardly have done anything about it anyhow. My first lesson is to-morrow at twelve o'clock, and I will try to slip over to the post-office and see whether there is anything from you there or not. That would be a consolation at least. Once more I beg you from my very heart, dear Herr Mayr, please do help me, and it would not harm that new teacher if you were to thrash him soundly, though I don't know whether you know him as intimately as that.

Well, I shall be at the post-office at half-past eleven, in case you want to tell me anything, and remain,

Your faithful pupil,

THEKLA BURMESTER."

When Florian Mayr had finished reading this letter,

his eyes flashed and the corners of his mouth twitched with satanic joy. He finished his breakfast quickly and got ready to go out. It was snowing, but he nevertheless left his umbrella standing and subjected his three walking sticks to careful examination in regard to weight, elasticity, and handiness, finally giving preference to an extremely supple stick made of steel rod wound with hemp and lacquered, with a heavy leaden knob, also covered with hemp, a kind of stick long ago gone out of fashion, that used to be called a "death-dealer."

Gayly whistling the "cudgeling-motif" from the *Meistersinger* ("I whacked his back all black and blue"), he sprang down the stairs and proceeded on the double quick to No. 2 Schumannstrasse. Up one flight a visiting-card on the door smiled him welcome. "Antonine Przewalski, Composer," the legend read. He rang energetically. A fat woman in a dirty wrapper appeared.

"Is his Honor, the Tone-Poet, at home?" he asked.

The landlady was somewhat astonished at this strange salutation.

"Oh, you mean the Polish gentleman? Oh, yes, he's at home. But I can't let anybody in so early. He's always asleep at this hour."

"Oh, that doesn't matter, my dear lady," exclaimed Florian naïvely; "I'm an old friend of his. He'll be delighted to see me. Just let me come in. I'll get him up all right!"

"Very well then, sir, but at your own risk. The gentleman can be very unpleasant when he's wakened."

"Me too!" remarked Florian ambiguously, as he

opened the door pointed out by the fat landlady and entered.

Przewalski's rooms consisted of an elegantly furnished salon and bed-room. The salon was, it is true, only half as large as Florian's own corner room in the Luisenplatz, but its magnificence was fairly overpowering. A rug covered the whole floor, a rug, to be sure, which twenty years ago was not new. In a corner a sofa and three chairs upholstered in green plush stood about a circular table, in the style of fifty years ago. The crocheted tidies, all crumpled up and held together by pins, hung limp from the backs of the chairs. In front of the sofa a Polish newspaper lay on the floor, and the carpet and green plush were all strewn with cigarette ashes. Over the sofa in an oval, gilt frame hung the portrait of the composer in half life size. Above it was fastened a dried-up laurel wreath. Against the opposite wall stood a writing-table, upon which there was another portrait of the composer, representing him at the piano, gazing dreamily into the unknown. Round it were grouped a number of cabinet photographs, mostly of décolleté young women. In the middle of the room a Blüthner grand piano stood open, and on the rack Chopin's Nocturnes together with a manuscript written in pencil. The composer was evidently extracting practical inspiration from a work of his great countryman. Upon the keys of the piano, too, lay cigarette ashes.

After a short examination of this room consecrated to genius, Florian Mayr stepped to the bed-room door and listened. Absolute silence. He opened the door carefully and looked in. In sweetest slumber lay the handsome Antonine in bed, and one end of his melan-

choly mustache waving gently in his zephyrlike breath. About the high alabaster forehead, that must have felt the consecrating kiss of Chopin's muse late into the night, clustered wantonly his dark locks.

Florian Mayr enjoyed for only half a minute the entrancing spectacle of the slumbering genius, then returned to the salon and sat down at the piano, leaving the door wide open. After Beckmesser's lovely melody in the last act of the *Meistersinger* he intoned the burlesque "Morgen ich leuchte im rosigen Schein," whacking out with it, *fortissimo*, Beckmesser's amazing guitar accompaniment. Then followed immediately the "cudgeling-motif." As a finale he hammered it out with both hands in octaves, but with the left hand half a tone lower than the right!

The din was appalling. It was a truly diabolical morning-call, enough to frighten the best conscience in the world out of its sleep. Florian stopped for a moment. Yonder in the bed-room something growled and snorted, and Florian thought he caught the words, "*psia krew*." "How are you, old man?" he shouted back cheerily. "I was only giving a little au-bade."

He seized his stick and advanced to the threshold of the bed-room, where he took off his hat and made a comical bow towards the bed.

Przewalski raised himself up sleepily and rubbed his eyes, now recognizing his morning caller for the first time. He cleared his throat, wheezed hard a few times and said:

"What for did you wake me? Beastly — low-lived! What do you want here?"

"Dear me, I only wanted to express my thanks for

the kind information that you gave yesterday about me."

Florian said this in the pleasantest tone in the world, putting on his hat without ceremony. Then grabbing the leaden handle of his cane he flourished it up and down over the coverlet until it sang.

Przewalski winced every time the thing whistled by his nose. He seized the featherbed in both hands and pulled it over his head, ducking under it for protection.

"Keep quiet the stick!" he cried through his nose. "You make me nervous."

"Oh, never mind," replied Florian, smiling pleasantly. "You know I always have to have something in my hand to play with — so that my fingers won't get stiff, don't you know? Awfully nice little stick, eh?" And he made it whiz close by the composer's nose a couple of times. "Wouldn't I like to lay a couple of dozen with it over some really deserving person! You can't think of anyone, can you?"

"Go away — leave me in peace!" cried the handsome Pole, looking out uneasily with one eye from behind the featherbed. "I have not the custom to receive visitors so early in the morning."

Florian put his stick under his arm, stuck his hands in his overcoat pockets and continued, without even noticing Antonine's remark.

"Look here, how would you act towards a man who said you were a woodchopper and no pianist, eh?"

Przewalski pricked up his ears and shoved back the bedclothes.

"How would you treat a man, for instance, who asserted that you were a stupid ass, a dirty ape, a miser-

able, deceitful back-biter, and I don't know what else,—a stupid idiot of an imitator and no creative artist at all? If I should say all that about you, what would you do?"

Przewalski sat up in bed, ran his hand through his dishevelled hair, snorted in alarm and called out,

"I shall not stand it! You have come here to assault me. Go away!"

"But, my dear colleague, don't get so excited. I'm only speaking hypothetically. I only want to know what to do with the chap who says I called a worthy old lady a 'silly goose,' and an 'old cow' and was being sued for libel,—and that I was a poisoner to boot!"

"That is not true! I did not say that! Who told you that?"

"Well, well, just fancy! It was you then! Hm, I must confess I never would have believed it of you. I wouldn't have thought it possible to have so many dirty lies told behind one's back for only ten marks! All right then, just have the goodness to decide whether I shall sue you for libel and show you up before the whole musical world, or whether you prefer to take a damned good licking right here and now!"

"Oho! So!" snorted Przewalski, his voice trembling with fear. "Khn, khn! You threaten to strike me! Oh, you want to assault me, eh? But I will not have it, no! Oh, I shall sue you for assaulting me in my own home!"

"Oh, never mind, you can do that afterwards," replied Florian unconcerned. "But I shall have to thrash you before you can prosecute me, you know."

So get up lively,—let's get it over as soon as possible! *Bis dat qui cito dat*, the Romans used to say!"

He raised his stick threateningly in his right hand, while with the left he made a motion towards his victim's curly head, as if to pull him out of bed by the ears.

The handsome Antonine turned as white as a sheet. He threw himself back upon the pillows, kicked out spasmodically with both feet and endeavored to ward off awkwardly with his arms the attack of the Angel of Wrath, crying out piteously,

"Let me alone, you low fellow, let me alone! I shall not stand it!"

Master Florian let his stick fall, took a step back and exclaimed with apparent astonishment,

"Eh, what's that? You don't want to be thrashed? All right—all you've got to do is to say so, and we'll make some other arrangement. I'll tell you what,—do you give me a written promise never to give lessons in the house of Consul Burmester, and I'll overlook your scoundrelly libel just this once. What do you say? If you like that better, get up and write that down for me."

"Yes, but go into the other room or I can't get up," sighed Antonine with a feeling of evident relief.

"Oh, don't mind me," said Florian, grinning good-naturedly. "Hello, there's a door leading into the hall. You'd like to skip out that way, eh? Oh, no, dear boy, that won't do!"

The key was on the inside. Florian went to the door, made sure that it was locked, extracted the key and slipped it into his pocket.

"So, now we're all right. Please don't waste any time on your toilette; I'm in a beastly hurry you know. I suppose you've no objection to my knocking your miserable old piano to pieces a little, while I wait, have you?"

And without waiting for an answer to this modest demand he went back into the salon, shutting the door nearly to behind him. He took a few heavy steps towards the piano, and then returned on tiptoe to the door and waited. He heard the bed creak. The handsome Antonine rose and now — right enough, just as he expected! — *Przewalski* was on the point of slamming the door to and bolting it on the inside. But *Florian* was quicker than he. Thrusting his walking-stick through the crack he easily shoved back the desperately struggling composer with the weight of his shoulder, and, sticking his head into the bed-room, greeted the discomfited Antonine with a cheerful grin.

"No, no, old chap, that wasn't what I intended! Come right in just as you are. You're pretty enough to kiss, pity I'm not a girl. Well, perhaps you'd better put on your dressing-gown, you might catch cold."

Przewalski bit his lip and muttered an oath in Polish. There was nothing for it, however, but to slip on his dressing-gown obediently and follow his tormentor into the drawing-room.

"What do you want with me?" he asked in a sullen rage.

"Have the kindness to sit down there, dear friend, and write about like this:

"I, the undersigned, hereby pledge my word of honor not to give *Fräulein Thekla Burmester* any further instruction in pianoforte playing under any

consideration whatever, and not to recommend any other teacher to her. If I should nevertheless break this my sacred word of honor, I hereby acknowledge myself to be a low-lived scoundrel and stand ready to undergo without complaint the thrashing to which Herr Florian Mayr, pianist of this city, has condemned me. Signature and date.' "

Antonine sat down and wrote. It was evidently no easy task, for he made quite a number of pauses which he filled up with deep sighs and inarticulate grunts. At last he handed the patiently waiting Florian the complete document. The latter looked it through with considerable gravity, and remarked,

"You've left out the 'low-lived scoundrel' and the 'thrashing.' "

Antonine only shrugged his shoulders. He sat there in his chair with pallid features, shaking knees and disordered locks, the very picture of misery. Florian almost felt a tinge of sympathy for him. He folded up the paper and put it in his breast pocket and said, "Well, let's call it all square then. If you don't keep your word you're a low-lived scoundrel all the same, whether you give it to me in writing or not. And you'll get the thrashing too, don't forget that for a moment. I'll keep an eye on you. And now, my dear colleague, I have the honor to wish you a very good morning!" So saying he tipped his hat, laid the bed-room key on the table and turned towards the door. But the handsome Antonine sprang up with clenched fists and screamed in uncontrollable fury,

"Herr Mayr, you are a —"

"What, if you please?" interrupted Florian, turning and raising his stick threateningly.

"Oh, you are a — a very extraordinary person!" continued the other in a cowed whisper.

"Oh, thanks very much!" said Florian and left the room. He had scarcely set foot on the stairs before the apartment door was jerked open behind him, and there stood the noble Pole in dressing-gown and bare legs.

"Oh, you fellow," he screamed as loud as he could, "I have thrown you down the stairs, I have. You know that!"

Then he retreated with extraordinary celerity and slammed the outside door to. Florian heard him yell in the corridor,

"Madam Cebrian, you are a witness that I have just thrown this gentleman down the stairs!"

Herr Florian Mayr was in uncommonly high spirits and very much pleased with himself as he strolled round to the private conservatory where he taught on this particular morning. In reality his duties kept him there until noon, but at eleven he requested one of his colleagues to take over his pupils, as he had to meet his grandmother at the railway station. The matter was easily arranged and thus Florian Mayr found himself a few minutes past eleven on the way to Post Office No. 7. There he was obliged to promenade up and down for a quarter of an hour before his patience was rewarded by the appearance of Fräulein Thekla. As soon as he descried her coming, he stepped into a doorway, where he remained until she came out of the Post Office with his letter in her hand, looking uneasily about her. As she caught sight of Florian she gave a little cry of joyful surprise. He approached her laughingly shaking a threatening finger.

"Well, well, young lady! I know something about you! You receive secret letters *poste restante*; from young gentlemen too, I fancy, eh? Oh, if I should tell mamma about that!"

Thekla blushed in embarrassment, and replied to this salutation with rather an awkward girlish curtsy.

"Oh, Herr Mayr, you are only joking," she exclaimed naïvely. "You know it was only your letter that I got!"

"I beg your pardon, my dear Fräulein! Perhaps I'm not a young gentleman?" he queried. "To be sure I've got a face like a leathery old church-father in a mediæval picture. You are evidently not aware how miserably young I am. Twenty-three! Aha, that makes you stare, doesn't it? Yes ma'am, I'm at the most dangerous age, I mean when one is capable of the most idiotic things."

"Oh, I don't believe that, Herr Mayr," remonstrated Thekla, looking up at him doubtfully.

"Indeed I am. I said in my letter that I was going to run off with you. If that isn't idiotic I'd like to know what is!"

"What, really?" cried Thekla, her eyes brightening joyfully. They had walked together round the next corner, and were now strolling down the Jerusalemstrasse, without really knowing where they were. Florian looked down with a droll smile upon the fresh, pretty girl at his side, to whom the dark plush dress and furs were so becoming. His expression had a good deal of the uncle in it but he was just a little smitten as well. Her charming embarrassment amused him immensely.

"Hm, what do you take me for?" he went on.

"Half-way measures always were hateful to me. Before I'd let anybody else give you piano lessons, I'd rather run off with you myself. That seems to be the only possibility left. Am I not right?"

"If you really think so, Herr Mayr," answered Thekla bashfully. She was quite at sea whether he was in earnest or was only poking fun at her. "Didn't you get my second letter?" she added in order to cover her embarrassment. Florian replied in the affirmative and then proceeded to give her a most graphic description of his morning visit to the noble Pan Przewalski. How proud and happy Thekla was! Her cheeks glowed and her eyes danced as she listened eagerly, looking up admiringly at her tall, slim hero, who, armed only with a simple walking-stick, had dared to do battle for her and to invade the lair of the long-haired monster, to which her inexorably musical mamma was ready to sacrifice her.

"How kind you are, Herr Mayr," she exclaimed fervently, as he brought his story to a close. "Do you really think he won't come any more?"

"We can see about that right now, for to-day at least," replied Florian. "Your lesson was to be at noon, wasn't it? It will be twelve in a few minutes. We'll just watch."

"Almost twelve!" cried Thekla in alarm. "Oh, dear me, I must run home as fast as I can. Where are we anyhow? Why we're quite lost!"

"Oh, nonsense, you needn't go home at all to-day, Fräulein Thekla," laughed Florian. "There's no piano lesson to-day and walking is a good deal more sensible. It was I who prescribed it for you!"

"Oh dear," said Thekla anxiously, "I'd rather go

to walk with you, Herr Mayr, but I really must be home at twelve. Mamma doesn't know that the Polish gentleman isn't coming, you know. And where shall I say I've been if I don't go home at all? Oh, what a lot of people there are here! If anyone should recognize us!"

She began to walk fast in the direction of the Markgrafenstrasse. She was quite excited and paid hardly any attention to Florian when he teased her about their rendezvous.

The clock on the French church in the Gendarmen-Markt struck twelve before they reached the house in which the Burmesters lived; and they were still about fifty yards distant from it when they suddenly caught sight of no less a personage than Herr Przewalski emerging from the Burmesters' door. Thekla was so frightened at sight of him that she was in doubt whether to turn and run or hide behind her tall friend's back. But Florian caught her firmly by the hand and dragged her along without ceremony. A few steps more and they stood directly before the composer, who was walking along with bowed head and half-closed eyes, and was not aware of their approach until it was too late to avoid them.

"Well, well, there you are again, dear friend," called out Florian jovially, flourishing his stick like any dashing young corps-student to lend emphasis to his salutation. "You haven't troubled yourself to call on the Herr Consul, have you? You see Fräulein Burmester wasn't expecting you to-day."

Przewalski gasped for words. "Oh, I see — I understand perfectly," he stammered. "You must pardon me, my dear young lady, I am obliged to forego

the honor — I have explained the Frau mother my reasons."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed Florian in a tone of pretended surprise. "Fräulein Burmester will be awfully sorry about that, won't you, Fräulein?"

But Thekla in her embarrassment could do nothing but smile. The handsome Antonine took off his hat to the girl, shook back his flowing locks, and said with his usual snort as he replaced his hat upon his brow,

"Gracious Fräulein will excuse me, I am in a hurry. Frau mamma was in great anxiety about you. She will be much relieved to hear you were in such excellent company!"

And so saying he set himself in motion without vouchsafing Mayr so much as a look. The latter took off his hat and bowed low, calling out hilariously,

"I have the honor, my dear colleague! Uncommonly pleased to see you again!"

And laughing heartily, he caught Thekla by the hand and strode off with his long legs, dragging her with him.

But he had not gone far when he felt a hard object in contact with his shoulder, and, turning round suddenly, beheld before him the handsome Antonine, who had caught up with him and had tapped him on the shoulder with the handle of his umbrella.

"I forbid it!" snorted the Pole; "I forbid it positively! I do not know you. Do you understand? I do not want persons I do not know to salute me!"

Thus delivering himself, he turned upon his heel and strode off with his nose in the air.

Florian watched him a while with an amused smile, then he cried in a tragicomic tone,

"Woe is me, I am undone!"

But Thekla was hardly in a state of mind at that moment to appreciate humor.

"Oh dear, oh dear, what shall I say when I get home?" she cried anxiously.

"The truth of course; what else? I will be responsible for everything, my dear young lady!"

And with a last reassuring press of the hand he took leave of her at her door.

CHAPTER V

Satan

THAT evening Florian Mayr went to Herr Raphael Silberstein's to hear the music-drama *Satan*. He arrived a little late but there was no need to tip-toe into the room so cautiously for just at that moment Peter Gais had let loose all hell. A Bechstein concert-grand which had seen some twenty years of service trembled under the ponderous paws of its gifted tamer. Rumbling tremolos, octaves roaring in the deepest bass, struck *martellando*, the clanking rattle of chords of the diminished seventh in wild disorder, chromatic runs, foam dashing up and falling back, flashing tongues of flame sharp-pointed, the reverberation of thunder in the bowels of the earth, groaning contra-bass darkness and lurid treble lightning — that was the tone-picture of hell, that was the decorative style *al fresco*.

Florian Mayr remained standing by the door and at first took no notice of the assembled company. This was a kind of music that really made it hard for one to see, almost to hear. But the force and fire of the interpretation could not fail to make an impression as well upon the musician as upon the layman.

Peter Gais in his outward appearance had five-eighths Beethoven, two-eighths Rubinstein, and one-eighth of incongruous elements which were thus probably his own Gaisic contribution. He was barely of medium height, thickset, his head very bulky, still more bulky his nose

which was a formless lump; his forehead was high-arched and displayed striking musical bumps, the blond eyebrows were scarcely noticeable, the round blue eyes strongly protruding, the mouth large and brutal, but the lips firm and energetic; the whole face unhealthy, pale, cheese-colored, and entirely beardless; his yellowish gray hair, smoothed back from his forehead without a parting, was long but not luxuriant. Leaning forward, his lips tightly closed, he stared at his manuscript and manipulated the keyboard with the strength of four hands. Behind him sat Raphael Silberstein, touching from motives of pure reverence only the uttermost corner of his tipped-up chair and looking over the shoulder of the mighty genius at the manuscript to turn the leaves for him. He was taller than Peter Gais by fully two heads, very lank and slender; he had a pitch-black shock of hair kept closely cropped and an unsightly black beard under the large, unmistakable nose of his race. Had it not been for this altogether too obtrusive nose, one might almost have called Raphael Silberstein a handsome young man for he had the smooth round forehead of a madonna, heavy black eyebrows, the large deepset eyes of an enthusiast, and a pale but clear complexion. In the expression of his face and in the awkward attitudes of his abnormally long limbs there was a certain something that was childlike and touching which, however, by reason of the nose was constantly in danger of becoming ridiculous.

The storm of hell subsided. After a few staccato chords came a gloomy and impressive theme, obviously for the brasses, probably the "motif of Satanic Majesty." A young girl, small, very slim, with the large eyes of a martyr in her pale little face which was

framed in a wilderness of soft, dark brown locks that fell luxuriantly to her shoulders, rose noiselessly from her chair near the door and handed Florian Mayr a hectograph text of *Satan* and pointed out the passage which had now been reached.

He read: "The devils and the damned flee into the glowing, rocky gorges. Satan rises from the depths, laughs contemptuously after them, spreads his mighty, bat-like pinions, and mounts a throne of solid rock at the right." And then followed a long monologue of Satan which was, indeed, in the highest degree characteristic of the lord of darkness for it remained absolutely obscure what the gentleman really wanted to say. It was a wilderness of high-sounding words done into thoroughly bad verse. This much only seemed to be conveyed, namely, that his infernal majesty purposed to seduce a fair Christian saint who at that moment was confined in the cell of a Roman circus, tremblingly awaiting the hour when she should be thrown to the wild beasts. What it was that had attracted Satan to this poor girl in particular was for the time being in no wise discernible.

But at this point Peter Gais began to sing and Florian Mayr shut his book to listen, like the rest of the company, reverently. But this it was easier to resolve to do than to do it, for Peter Gais sang as wretchedly as only a German composer can. He had not the slightest trace of a voice, the notes seemed to choke him, the "r's" he gargled in the back part of his throat, and moreover with his wildly protruding eyes and his mouth diagonally open he presented so strange a spectacle that less respectful natures found it difficult to preserve a becoming gravity. But they soon became accustomed

to the lack of grace and beauty in the delivery. At all events the composer knew how to bring out the dramatic accents; he struck the notes firmly in the middle so that one could at least get a notion of the melodic construction; in all passages that were too high for him he lapsed into rhythmic recitative. After a while, to be sure, his voice deserted him completely and he began to whistle in a full tremolo. That at all events was more agreeable to listen to than his diabolical singing, although of course, it was more difficult to follow the progress of the drama than before, despite his faulty rendering of the text.

After paying strict attention for half an hour, Florian Mayr was unable to make either head or tail to it, although he repeatedly sought enlightenment from the book. At last with a gesture of appeal he turned to the maiden of the dark locks and this remarkable creature, without having followed the book at all, was actually able to find the passage they had just reached. Obviously she knew the composition almost by heart. Florian would have been glad to question her more closely concerning the uncanny relations between Satan and the saint but his very first attempt to whisper a question to her was rebuked with a look so threatening that he abandoned his presumptuous undertaking. Strange, that threatening look! It was aimed at him and had hit him, that he felt, but yet it had glanced by him at an angle of some forty degrees. The dark girl with the face of a martyr was crosseyed! Too bad, with her gentle anæmic beauty! Florian had seated himself on a foot rest close by her and was lost in the contemplation of her extremely fine profile. On the other side of her sat a gentleman who, it was clear, was

zealously engaged in the same occupation, a tall, slender man with dark hair, reddish Henri-quatre beard, black eyebrows that grew together, and with spectacles upon a nose that was too short. The gentleman seemed to be wholly engrossed in the dark girl and little interested in *Satan*. Florian Mayr, too, felt less and less under the ban of the whistling, hoarsely groaning Titan who was now pounding the piano almost with his fists. As a confirmed Wagnerite and an enthusiastic devotee of Liszt, he had a well-trained stomach, capable of digesting prodigious masses of sound; nevertheless after half an hour of attentive listening even his nervous system began to rebel energetically against *Satan's* music. In fact Peter Gais was in music a man of the violent passions: Hate, Vengeance, Rage, Lust, Scorn, these he knew how to depict in glaring but nevertheless impressive colors, but he almost entirely lacked the ability to express the tender emotions. The pious ecstasy of the saint which came in the second scene proved to be pitifully trivial, and the chorus of Christians sounded like the monotonous sing-song of some amateur musical club. It was, therefore, not surprising that very soon this music should tire the listener, especially one trained in the modern school to whom homophonic music dealing only with harmonic and dynamic effects, made no appeal; it must all produce a brutal effect upon the nerves and even the most good-natured nerves cannot long endure that sort of thing. At first Florian Mayr himself was dazzled by the wealth of color in this genuinely dramatic music; then for a time he had admired the profuse flow of invention that could originate such strikingly characteristic motifs; but now he was hungry and thirsty for polyphonics, for some intricate contrapuntal

work. All of this had, so to speak, been dumped out; titanic, to be sure, just as great masses of rock are impressive, piled in wild confusion one on top of the other as a good honest earthquake in its wrath will sometimes heap them up but for the finer handiwork of God who causes the tenderest little plants to twine and blossom around the huge boulders, Peter Gais was painfully lacking in appreciation.

For an hour and a quarter Florian Mayr had been doing his best; he could listen no longer. He sat and admired the dark-haired girl, who still continued to stare fixedly, so pale and serious, with her chin thrown forward, one eye on the composer and the other somewhere around the corner to the left; she did not allow herself to be disturbed in the slightest degree by the circumstance, which would have brought blushes to the face of any normal young girl, namely, that she was sitting in the cross-fire, as it were, of the admiring glances of two men, one to the right of her, the other to the left. Florian now found time also to bestow some attention upon the other guests. He discovered a few familiar faces among them; most, however, were strangers to him. Enthroned on the sofa, erect and scrupulously rigid, sat a rotund little elderly lady with the face of a small pullet, youthfully smooth and infinitely goodnatured. She blushed when anyone looked at her and from time to time she heaved a gentle long-drawn sigh. It was the composer's mother. Beside her, reclining comfortably in the corner of the sofa, her legs crossed, sat a young lady whom Florian had recently heard play at the Singakademie, Ilonka Badacs, an Hungarian pianist, who, to advertise her concert, had called herself a favorite pupil of Liszt,— at which

moreover Herr Mayr had really taken serious offence, for he perceived that, although she had temperament, she was unpardonably careless of her technique. Ilonka Badacs had wickedly wide, ivory-black eyes with whites of pure porcelain, a large sensual mouth, glorious teeth, a genuine Magyar cut of countenance, and a frightful quantity of powder on a complexion that was not very clear. In an armchair next to her sat a corpulent songstress with a pug nose, looking pleased and unenlightened. Another young lady, tall, raw-boned, slim, and very intelligent-looking, sat on the opposite side of the round table. She was a young singer who had recently attracted attention by her splendid contralto voice. Gentlemen were in the majority: besides the already mentioned profile-admirer with the reddish Henri-quatre, there were five very young lads and a middle-aged gentleman in a velvet jacket, the very type of a handsome man with flowing hair, a dark mustache, and a lofty brow. He looked altogether too intelligent to be a tenor; he might perhaps be a violinist. Finally, the only old man present, and doubtless the guest of honor, was the conductor of the Royal opera, a stout, thickset person with a bald head, mixed gray beard, spectacles, and a red nose.

Satan, the introduction to the tetralogy *Man*, had only one act — but what an act that was! When, after an hour and a half of hard work, the composer rose from the piano stool exhausted and asked for a short rest, only about half of the task, according to the information vouchsafed by the dark-haired girl, had been surmounted. Everybody got up and stretched,— nobody knew what to say. Raphael Silberstein stood awkwardly leaning over his genius of a friend, still

overtopping him by two heads, and he pressed his hand in silence. He doubtless thought that the general speechlessness meant that all were awestruck. Then on tip-toe but with squeaking boots he glided over to the guest of honor and whispered radiantly: "Well, what do you say to that, Herr Hofkapellmeister?"

The stout old official, the last to rise, now struggled out of his comfortable chair, held his hand before his mouth, and whispered up to the towering Silberstein: "Yes, yes, that was pretty good. But, do you know, with all that musical hell-charm one gets such a thirst — now, you know, if I could get a glass of beer, why that's just what I'd like!" This conductor was a native of Munich and in the Imperial capital he made a special point of playing this part of an aboriginal Bavarian both in speech and in manners.

Raphael Silberstein whispered that a light repast as well as something to drink had been provided and then humbly asked the composer if he would allow the company to partake of a little bodily refreshment. He then threw open the folding doors which led to the adjoining room and with an embarrassed smile and in a low voice invited his guests to help themselves to sandwiches, beer, and punch.

In the midst of the general movement towards the dining-room, Raphael Silberstein seized Florian Mayr by the arm and led him up to the composer who still stood by the piano, wiping the perspiration from his brow. He made the two gentlemen acquainted.

"I've already had the honor once," said Florian. "I don't know if you still remember —"

Peter Gais nodded and, smiling absentmindedly, gave Florian his hand.

It was now necessary to say something; but how formulate a judgment in such haste? Florian looked down at his boots and up at the ceiling; at last he burst out: "My God, how you did sweat!"

Peter Gais smiled ironically. "You are quite right, Herr ——?" he said sharply.

"My name is Mayr," said Florian a little sheepishly. "But, for a fact, you made hell so hot,—musically, I mean,—'twould have been no wonder if we'd all been sweating. That's the sort of music, ha! ha! It fairly gives out heat, ha! ha! magnificent! Now, do we get to heaven next?"

The composer shrugged his shoulders impatiently and with a frown turned to his faithful Raphael. "My dear friend, it seems to me you have not prepared your guests properly. This gentleman has no idea whatever—please, won't you address yourself to the librettist?"

Herr Silberstein hurried away to drag the poet out of the crowd around the buffet. The poet came. He was carrying a glass of punch; a piece of bread and sausage had just disappeared into his extraordinarily large mouth. A second piece of sausage he held in his hand. His head was shaped like a rather sharp-pointed gourd and by far the greater part of it consisted of forehead. On top of the highest peak of this brow rose a thicket of pale blond bristles and on each half of his upper lip some five or seven equally blond hairs twined sinuously.

"May I make the gentlemen acquainted: Herr Florian Mayr, pianist, Herr Emanuel Schrempf of Königsberg, the author of the drama."

Thereupon the host hastened away to drag forth another victim and force him to pass judgment.

Florian maintained that this meeting with the writer of *Satan* gave him extraordinary pleasure. To this civility Herr Schrempf was for the moment unable to respond, as it was first necessary to remove the obstruction of sausage from his throat. He chewed with accelerated speed, raised his glass to Florian, and with an effort said: "Pros't!" The acquaintanceship was thus begun in due form. In order to respond to the amiable poet's toast Florian had to procure something to drink. In doing this he found himself beside the dark-haired girl and he offered to pour out a glass of punch for her.

"If you like," replied the fair one curtly. Then she turned again to the gentleman with the reddish whiskers with whom she had been conversing. "It's the highest time anyhow," Florian heard her say, "that Wagner was superseded."

The gentleman smiled ironically as he replied: "Would it not be better to wait and see what Wagner himself can give us? You know, we still have *Parsifal* to look forward to in Bayreuth."

"Oh, fudge! *Parsifal*!" retorted the girl, turning up her nose, "Christian mysticism, asceticism, senile impotence!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the gentleman, "why you're as bitter as gall."

Florian at this juncture handed her the filled glass and said, laughing: "According to that then we might as well kill off all our great artists between the ages of fifty and sixty? You are radical, by Jove! But do you know, Fräulein, I'm willing to maintain that there's a line of limitation on the side of youthfulness also."

"What do you mean by that?" inquired the somber maiden. Her voice was sweet and winsome and just a little bit clouded.

"I think this gentleman understands me," answered Florian, indicating the reddish whiskers. The gentlemen introduced themselves. The reddish whiskers called himself Baron von Ried. He was a young author whose name had recently become generally known through a humorous sketch of his about a pair of old trousers. His intimates, however, were aware that he himself was inclined to place a higher estimate upon his talents as a composer than upon those as an author.

In fact he was a dilettante in all the arts, played seven instruments, spoke seven languages, and acknowledged seven different fatherlands.

"Shall we tell her?" asked the complex and versatile baron in a bantering tone, as he winked at Florian Mayr and jerked his thumb in the direction of the little maiden.

"Oh dear! If you only want to make fun of me, I'd rather go away," snapped the dark-haired one. "It's a great pity anyhow that a genius like Gais should scatter his pearls before people like you."

"Well, I like that!" exclaimed the baron involuntarily and Florian Mayr said with a good-humored laugh: "All right, let's be friends and call each other by our first names."

But the girl of the dark hair tried to get away; she was in a rage; the baron, however, held her firmly by the hand and said with kindly decision: "Stop! That won't do at all. You'll stay right here. And now, if you please, you sweet little wildcat, let us have

your answer to one question. How is it possible to be such a charming girl with such a pale, inscrutable Medusa-head, and such mysterious eyes — Oh Lord! Oh Lord! Do you know what you are destined for?"

"To listen to stale flattery?"

"Stale or not,—that too. But your real destiny is to lie upon a white bearskin, clad in black velvet with bare arms and, if possible, bare feet in very small slippers and to play with a small black panther. May I be permitted to present you with the polar bear's skin the next time I get a good-sized check from my publishers?"

The dark-haired maiden replied without change of expression: "Do you think to intoxicate me with such nonsense, Baron? You have begun much too late. Men have no more power over me."

"The deuce! Why, how old are you if I may ask?"

"Eighteen,—old enough to have completely done with men. You know very well, you can't deny it, that you are all animals where we women are concerned, if only we are young and beautiful. How can anyone seriously concern herself with a class of human beings that have remained so far behind in their development?"

"My poor child, what men you must have met!" said the baron in a kindly tone with sudden earnestness.

"Men?" she burst out. "Only two,—the rest are monkeys. But I know the creative genius and I know the feeling, sympathetic heart; that's enough for me." With these weighty words she slipped away between the two men and joined a group in the other corner of the room.

"By the creative genius of course she means Peter

Gais," whispered the baron to Florian Mayr, "and the feeling sympathetic heart is her own father."

"Who is her father?"

"Hush, softly! There he stands, the handsome man in the velvet jacket. Didn't you know the girl? Her name is Libussa Tomatschek. Her father is the celebrated violinist, Toby Tomatschek. He doesn't play any more, it's true; hasn't for a long time but Joachim and Sarasate *e tutti quanti* are nothing but lousy little boys beside him; this statement he will be very glad to confirm if you ask him. Now the man writes musical criticisms,—rather flowery but on the whole not bad."

"And the girl?" inquired Florian.

"Well, you see what she is. He has completely turned her head. She's simply unendurable, the little toad, and yet she could be so charming if youth and charm and reason and everything had not been driven out of her by this 'genius' craze in which she was brought up. And now the 'creative genius' will probably give her the final blow. Just think of it, her great sympathetic heart she has placed at the disposal of the Titan Gais, and acts as nurse for his wife and children,—this child of eighteen! Did you notice her little numbed hands? She no longer gets even her night's rest; she looks starved, too. The Titan treats her like a dog, they say, and she in return for this worships him. Naturally his wife is jealous —. See, there sits mamma Gais, the poor little hen. She goes through life sighing and she is so in love with her great son! As recompense, of course, she's shamefully maltreated. Oh, it must be a fine vocation to be a Titan's mother!"

Florian Mayr listened attentively. "When I hear

things like that," he said thoughtfully, "it always makes my right hand itch. I believe that's what's the matter with mankind to-day: it doesn't get pummeled enough. By the way, didn't you write an article a little while ago about the Titan? It seems to me I saw your name to it."

"Yes, I did," replied the baron. "I cannot deny it, I was a bit overhasty. When I wrote that about the Titan, I hadn't heard *Satan*."

"Well, what do you think of him? In that article you gave him a tremendous puff."

"Yes, and I do really think that the man has the makings of a genius in him, but it is unfortunate for him that his works could not have been brought before the public properly. As it is, he has lost all power of self-criticism, while the few he always has around him, immature young men and crazy females, adore him unconditionally and have cultivated in him a species of madness, a big head, which probably soon enough will ruin his creative power entirely. Do you imagine that my article satisfied him in the least? His poor mother came to thank me with tears of joy in her eyes but the great Peter has obviously considered me ever since more of a cretin than ever and Raphael Silberstein under the pseudonym of 'Germanicus' has already made sport of me and my article in the papers. You know, there is a sheet in which 'Germanicus' is permitted to make his offerings at the shrine of Peter Gais without restraint. Well, and our friend Silberstein — do you know him at all intimately?"

"No, I only know that he plays the piano very well but very coldly."

"Yes, well, you see, that is another remarkable char-

acter. The young man is incredibly industrious. His whole life long he has worked and struggled,—against his parents, against his talents, against his race,—his life has been one ceaseless exhausting battle in spite of the fact that as a well-to-do independent man he might have had things so comfortable. He is an idealist and, if I read him aright, a candidate for suicide. Because he had great technical gifts for piano playing, he thought he was a born musician but his parents would not hear of it. So he took up Egyptology and became a scholar. He took his doctor degree at twenty-two and now he wants to qualify here as instructor. Meanwhile, however, both his parents have died and he has yielded once more to his passion for music; he is quite aware that he is not a creative artist but now he hopes to get into the history of music in the tow of a genius. Gais can't endure him, makes fun of him constantly, but he accepts his pecuniary assistance just the same. The clouds of incense with which the poor young fellow envelopes him he sniffs up graciously. The worst of it is that the good Raphael understands music a good deal too well not to find out some day that he has over-estimated his idol and the awakening will be a terrible thing for him. I'm afraid he'll hang himself, if he doesn't go into a monastery. It was Gais's music, you know, that converted him to Christianity."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by Fräulein Ilonka Badacs, the Hungarian pianist, who came up to them and wanted to know: "Who was maiden crazy with one large eye straight out and one large eye alongside?" She spoke brokenly with a strong Hungarian accent.

The baron informed her briefly about Libussa Tomat-

schek whereupon Fräulein Ilonka took him by the waistcoat button with pleasant familiarity and said: "Do you know, my dear Baron, how maiden crazy must be cured?"

"Oh, yes, I think I know a remedy," replied the baron laughing.

"Ah, bravo! You have understood me. Go — you make up to her."

"Must it be at once, Fräulein Badaes?"

"Why, yes. I so sorry for poor little kitten. If you make her again well very soon, I show you something pretty."

"Ah, I know,—probably little foot yours?" said the Baron, imitating her manner and laying his finger knowingly upon his nose.

Proud and radiant, Fräulein Ilonka seized the abashed Florian Mayr by the arm and said: "Look at that, my dear sir, so famous is my pretty foot, baron has already heard of it. What is your name, my dear sir?"

"Florian Mayr, at your service."

"Florian Mayr — ? Oh, you very famous too. I've heard of you. At my concert you have said to a gentleman that I play like little pig but have fire of the devil. The gentleman told me,—he was dear friend of mine."

Florian laughed outright. "Well, I say, that is rough; I was fairly caught that time. Are you very angry with me?"

"Why, of course not,—among professional colleagues — ! I've been told you play very finely — grand style — is it true?"

Florian shrugged his shoulders. "Judge for your-

self. Perhaps there'll be an opportunity some time. I shall be glad to play for you."

"All right,—shall be delighted. Where you live, Herr Mayr?"

He gave her his address and added: "Will you write me when and where I may meet you some day?"

"Oh, nonsense,—I come see you if I don't disturb you."

"Then you would have to come in the morning before ten or in the evening after six," replied Florian slightly embarrassed. "During the day I have a great many lessons to give. That is,—I'm not exactly in shape to receive ladies."

"That's nothing — among colleagues." This ended the matter so far as she was concerned, so she jumped to another topic. "Tell me, Herr Mayr, what do you think of Peter Gais? Honestly — he has fire of the devil too — I was carried away, of course, but, you know, I not at all like to give him a kiss, not for ten gulden!"

"At that price I'd not do it myself," rejoined Florian, laughing. Then they entered into a serious conversation about the composition they had just heard and in the course of this the sprightly Hungarian displayed excellent musical taste and judgment. Suddenly she threw out the question: "Tell me, Herr Mayr, have you not been with Liszt yet?"

He had not dared as yet, he said and again felt embarrassed. He gave enthusiastic expression to his reverence for the great Master and then with eager curiosity asked her how she had managed to get at him and if she really were a favorite pupil of his.

"But, dear Herr Mayr," she replied, "that is very simple. I went there and I played for the Master."

"Well, and then did he right away — ?"

"Then the Master laughed very friendly — oh, he is such a dear,—and he patted me on cheeks and all around and said: 'Brava! brava! *Pussta!* Boldness! I like it much — *Eljen!*' I laughed too. He said I had very pretty teeth. I begged him very sweetly to let me stay. I didn't understand what he said but I stayed. I studied hard and learned lots. Three years I go around with him,—Rome,—Budapest,—Weimar. I had a little money and when little money was gone dear Master paid for everything. O, the Master is so very good man! He always gave me recommendations for concert and said I was his *bête noire, une jolie bête à pattes méchantes*. Now can I call myself his favorite pupil?"

They had got thus far when Raphael Silberstein interrupted the eating, drinking, and chatting with the request that all should return to the music room to hear the second part of *Satan*. Florian Mayr felt an uneasy conscience when he thought of the composer because he had not made use of the interval to inform himself properly concerning the text. In going out he caught the poet and begged for a condensed explanation which might serve at a pinch.

In conclusion Herr Schrempf added: "I beg you, Herr Mayr, not to judge me by this text; it is the outcome of very singular circumstances. Herr Gais gave me no freedom at all. He changed everything about. Then he would sit down at the piano and play and screech and rage,—that's the way he wanted it, that's

the way I'd got to write it. It is really nothing but words furnished for music which was already written."

"Why did you put up with it?"

"Oh, you know, what can one do? After all Herr Gais is possessed of a demon; it's impossible to oppose him."

"Oh, I see."

The company took seats, new groups were formed, and in passing Florian heard the court-conductor say to the composer in broad Bavarian: "Yes, yes, yes, you're right. It's a horse's work, that score! All respect! When the general-intendant sees that, he'll fall right off the perch, don't you know? Wagner wouldn't have been given at the opera house if he'd had his way."

"You think, then, there is no prospect of getting *Satan* produced at the opera house?" asked Peter Gais with twitching nostrils.

"Don't forget, I beg of you, *Robert the Devil* is still in the repertory! However, you just try it; perhaps the general-intendant will propose that you make a ballet out of it."

Florian made his own comments upon all this as he sought out a place between Ilonka Badacs and Baron von Ried. In what frame of mind would the Titan take up the further rendering of his work! That he had composed it in an uninterrupted fever of inspiration, drawing upon what was his own and what was universal, not in stammering imitation nor with the laborious patching of a bungling second-hand talent, that was indisputable; he had given his best and, putting forth all his energy, he had endeavored to perform his work for this company. And what had been his reward? One had told him how terribly he was sweat-

ing and another had acknowledged that it was "horse's work" ! Most of them had said nothing at all but had eaten and drunk and busied themselves with their own affairs. And these were the more considerate ones, for it might still in their case be assumed that they had understood as long as they had not deliberately demonstrated the contrary. Raphael Silberstein, his own mother, and a few of the very young people did, to be sure, worship him but then that he knew beforehand. Yes, in this moment, Florian Mayr understood what the martyrdom of a creative artist must be, of one to whom it was denied ever to produce his work in the form in which he had planned it before the great public. And yet each separate individual of these cruel people was personally innocent; surely there was not one among them who was not impressed with the fact that here was a genuine artist expending all his energies to wring from them some intelligent appreciation of his work. Notwithstanding this no one was able to utter anything but platitudes which could only exasperate him.

Florian sat down with the firm purpose, at least so far as he was concerned, of following the performance with seriousness and respect; but to carry out this purpose was not so easy; with the best intentions in the world he could not help growing as tired and distracted as the others. Even with the most vivid imagination it was impossible to supply in thought the lacking scenery, the human voices, and the varied colors of the orchestra. Another half-hour passed and he caught himself eagerly awaiting the moment when Fräulein Ilonka's celebrated little foot should again peep forth under the hem of her skirt and at that moment he be-

came aware that the baron was engaged in the same interesting occupation. Fräulein Ilonka opened her large fan, whispering to right of her and whispering to left; some smiled, some snickered. Libussa Tomatschek threw indignant glances around; the little hen of a mamma sighed and grew more and more perturbed; the fat songstress yawned; the court-conductor was almost asleep; the handsome Tomatschek, with his delicately tapered fingers, pulled at his eyelids which made a soft clicking noise; some of the young men took refuge in the next room in order to incorporate the remains of the repast, and Raphael Silberstein hitched about so nervously on the outer edge of his chair that everyone was watching with anxious suspense to see it slip out from under him.

Amid the uproar of all hell the curtain descended upon the introduction to the tetralogy of *Man*. Satan had fought his fight to a finish and everybody jumped up as if redeemed. Some applauded frantically; all crowded round the composer to relieve themselves of a few superlatives which had just occurred to them or which they had been brooding over for the last hour. But all were in great haste to get home; they thanked their host for the great treat,— and ten minutes after the end of *Satan* the whole company was jostling in the corridor, crawling into top-coats, helping the ladies, and feeling in their purses for the five-groschen bits to give the maid.

It was half past eleven but when Florian Mayr reached the Luisenplatz and by the light of the street lamp in front of his door looked at his watch, it was — half past two! With Baron von Ried and Ilonka Badacs and the Tomatscheks, father and daughter, to-

gether with two of the youngest gentlemen of the party, he had gone to a restaurant. The result of the whole evening was that he went home with the conviction that he had never met a woman so crazy as the dark-haired girl nor one so amusing as Ilonka.

CHAPTER VI

Katzenjammer

FRAU STOLTENHAGEN found herself next morning in a state of no little excitement. It was already eight o'clock and Herr Mayr had not yet shouted into the hall for his hot water. At half past eight she had listened at his door, but without hearing a sound. At nine o'clock she had ventured to look through the key-hole, and even to knock lightly on the door, but in both cases without result. And now it was half past nine, and still no sign of life from behind the bolted door. Should she send for the locksmith? Herr Mayr went out every day without exception between half past nine and a quarter to ten.

A little before ten o'clock a good looking young lady appeared and asked to see Herr Mayr. The young lady was cheaply but neatly dressed, and looked exactly like one with whom a young man might like very well to establish relations of a certain character, the daughter of plain but worthy people, who would not be likely to place any difficulties in the way of a young artist. Frau Stoltenhagen was dreadfully excited. Something had happened to her Herr Mayr at last!

"So you want to see Herr Mayr?" she queried twice, in answer to the girl's question, surveying her from head to foot;

"Hm, I don't know whether he's at home or not; I don't believe he's up yet."

"Oh, that don't make any difference," replied the girl coolly. "Just tell him Marie from the Markgrafenstrasse is here. Then he'll know all right."

Frau Stoltenhagen opened her eyes wide and gasped in agitation. "Indeed! Marie from the Markgrafenstrasse. Just look at that! I wouldn't dare to do it. Besides he's locked himself in."

"Well then, just let me go in, Missis. He'll let me in all right." And without waiting for an answer the girl pushed by the bewildered landlady, and after being shown the right door, knocked energetically. Frau Stoltenhagen, her niece from Pomerania, and the servant girl stood behind her open-mouthed.

"*Kreuzdonnerwetter!* What the devil's that! Just let me alone, will you?" growled a hoarse and angry voice from within.

"Thank God, he's still alive!" exclaimed Frau Stoltenhagen. "I really thought something had happened to him." Nearing the door she called out with soothing amiability, "Don't disturb yourself, Herr Mayr, it's only the Fräulein Marie from the Markgrafenstrasse."

"Fräulein Marie may go to—somewhere else. This is no place to talk to me," growled the voice from within again.

But the girl was not to be put off, and without taking offense she called out: "Herr Mayr, it's me! I've got a letter from Fräulein and I'm to wait for an answer." And, turning to the inquisitive females behind her, she added with a smile, "It's only about the piano lessons."

The voice from within: "What does she want anyhow? What Fräulein?"

"Why Fräulein Thekla, sir."

"Thekla? Oh, just wait a bit; I'll be there in a minute." The bed creaked within, and the three spectators of the household of Stoltenhagen made off as fast as their legs could carry them, the niece from Pomerania whispering in feverish excitement to her aunt as she gave the latter a dig in the side, "Did you hear that, Aunt? Her name is Thekla!"

A moment later the door was opened slightly, and Florian Mayr thrust his paw through the crack and took possession of the letter. Going to the window, he pulled up the shade and endeavored to decipher the epistle. But his vision was not yet quite in order, and his legs were very cold, and his head — oh, his head! He doused it into ice-cold water and sneezed and snorted. Then he slipped on a few of the most necessary articles of clothing, called Marie from the Markgrafenstrasse into the room, and begged her to be seated. He thought he noticed that the girl looked at him strangely, and, glancing into the mirror as he passed it, he came to the conclusion that she was right! In the belief that he owed her some kind of explanation, he remarked,

"Well, Fräulein Thekla must have something very important to communicate if she has to wake me out of my morning's nap."

"Why, it's ten o'clock already, Herr Mayr," laughed Marie.

"What's that?" he cried incredulously, running for his watch, which lay on the night-stand. "Well, upon my word, half past four! I must have forgotten to wind my watch. You see, Marie, that's because my stomach is a little out of order — ow! It's

pretty bad still!" And turning away, he slouched, a bit ashamed of himself, to a chair near the window and proceeded to read the pale-blue note from Fräulein Thekla. It ran as follows:

"Oh, my dear Herr Mayr, I am quite desperate and you must help me somehow. Just think, that horrible man (I haven't got his card here and cannot write his name without it) called on Mamma again this afternoon and told her that he had met us together in the street. He said you were a very dangerous person, that is what he said, and were notorious for trying to make up to the young ladies whom you gave lessons to. Mamma said to me 'since you have rendezvous with your piano teacher, I shall not let you out in future.' And how do you think he excused himself to Mamma for not wanting to give me lessons any longer, when of course it was only because he was afraid of the thrashing you promised him? He said I made such an impression on his heart the very first time he saw me, that he did not feel it consistent with his honor and his conscience to ask of me a confidence and trust that a teacher ought to demand! Others might not feel so about matters of conscience, but he, as a member of the oldest Polish nobility, was sure he was right in such a case. Mamma was quite carried away by so much delicacy, and set him up as a model for me, so that I could see the difference between such a man and you! Wasn't that horrid? You really must help me, dear, good Herr Mayr. What shall I do? I don't believe a thrashing would do any good, he's such a common sort of person! I rely on you entirely, and please send me an answer by Marie, because I can't get out any more to get your letters from the post-office. Please, please, do not abandon,

Your unhappy,

THEKLA BURMESTER.

P. S.— Marie knows everything."

Florian let his hand with the note in it drop languidly at his side, rested his left elbow on his knee, and buried his face with a groan in his mighty hand. For a long while he kept silence, rubbed his dishevelled head with his long fingers, and emitted from time to time a deep sigh. At last the good Marie became impatient and inquired whether Herr Mayr would not give her a few lines in answer to Fräulein Thekla's note.

"Write! Now? Oh — ow! I — never write before breakfast."

"Well, shall I take her any message?"

"Oh, yes, please, I wish you would," replied Florian. Rising with an effort, he planted himself before Marie with his legs spread apart, and, looking down upon the girl with a painful expression, he appeared to await some further stimulation of his thinking powers from her.

Marie smiled intelligently. "You don't seem to be quite well, Herr Mayr."

He grinned with forlorn humor. "Oh, I don't know, I am quite well bodily, but you know this mental excitement — poor Fräulein Thekla! A thing like that always gets on my nerves right away. What would you do in such a case, Fräulein Marie?"

"Well, they do say as a herring is very good for it."

"Oh, I don't speak of myself; you're not making fun of me, Marie, are you? I mean Fräulein Thekla,— what shall I prescribe for her? I don't understand very well how to treat young ladies in such cases."

Marie grinned knowingly. "Well, Herr Mayr, if I might be so bold as to say it, I should think the matter was quite simple. Poor Fräulein Thekla is just eating her heart out because she can't take lessons of you

any more nor have anything more to do with you, and now she's afraid she'll have to marry that Polish gentleman with the lovelocks and the calf's eyes, and she just simply can't abide him."

"I'd like to whale the devil out of that fellow!" snarled Florian.

"Oh, don't you try that on, sir; that'll cost you money."

"How do you mean?"

"Lord, Herr Mayr, you must have noticed that our Fräulein is dead gone on you! Well then, what's to hinder? Why don't you marry her yourself?"

Florian opened his eyes wide and pointed with his gigantic fore-finger to his Herculean breast. "Me?"

"Well, and why not?" continued Marie confidentially. "The Herr Consul and our mistress, of course, wouldn't hear of it for a moment, but that's most usually the case, ain't it? You're a musician and the old lady was always dead gone on musicians. Well, and you know the proverb, 'With patience and spit you can catch a nit!' Just be up and doin'! When two young people mean to have each other the old folks have to give in sooner or later; and it wouldn't be the first time that a fine Fräulein ran away with a piano teacher, would it now? And after all Fräulein Thekla isn't so great anyway! I suppose you know that she ain't the Burmesters' real child, don't you? What? You don't know that? Why of course, only adopted, that's all. Her people were quite plain. But even if she shouldn't happen to get all the old folks' money, the consul is a very kind gentleman after all, and he ain't goin' to let her starve, I can tell you."

Marie had worked herself into a very fever of en-

thusiasm. As she talked she rose and followed the slowly retreating Florian across the room as far as the sofa, upon which he sank down with a sigh. He rested his head on his hands and was quite incapable of taking in the meaning of her eloquence. When she finally came to an end, he gave his knee a slap, and the table a sounding whack with his fist.

"For the Lord's sake stop that cataract of crazy gabble!" he shouted. "Did Fräulein Thekla tell you to bring me any such message as that, hey? Well then, just keep that nonsense to yourself."

"Well you needn't get so huffy about it!" cried the girl quite offended. "That's what I get for interesting myself in you. I suppose I can just go home now and tell Fräulein Thekla what an amiable gentleman you are! Lyin' abed at ten in the morning with such a nasty head on you! My word! I don't see how fine young ladies can find anything interesting in people like that. Well, good-by, Herr Mayr! You'd better crawl back into bed. I won't trouble you any longer."

"My Lord, these women! Don't get your back up so easy. Just consider my suffering condition."

He tried to catch her by the skirt, but she eluded his grasp and retreated to the door.

"Hgh! Fräulein Thekla's in a suffering condition too. It's enough to break your heart to see her worryin' herself to death, and you won't even write her a couple of lines! Well, what'll I tell her?"

Florian got up from the lounge groaning, dragged himself to where Marie stood and said weakly,

"Look here, my dear Marie, I wish you'd do me a great favor. I'll hold my face over the washbowl, and

you take the pitcher and pour the water over my head. Maybe that will clear my brains a little."

Marie had to laugh. "My word, Herr Mayr, you do ask a lot o' funny things of a body! Well, come here then. It won't hurt your head to get a good dressing down anyway!" And, laying aside umbrella and muff, she seized the heavy water-can and poured the entire contents over his throbbing head, as he had desired. He had let his long hair fall down over his eyes, and the wet locks fairly streamed as he rubbed his face with a towel. He stood there bent over with his legs apart dripping like a damaged gutter after a shower, when suddenly there came a sharp knock at the door, and, without waiting for an invitation to enter, a tall majestic form, attired in a long gray havelock and a broad brimmed hat of brown plush, stalked solemnly across the threshold.

Florian was so astonished to see this individual in his room that he abruptly interrupted the process of drying himself, and even forgot to say good-morning. But as he felt the sting of the cold water trickling down his back, he suddenly came to himself and cried, as he resumed the shampooing of his streaming locks,

"Ah, how do you do, Herr Tomatschek! Up so early? To what pray do I owe the honor?"

The visitor was indeed no other than Toby Tomatschek, the "violin-king," and even in the gray light of this winter morning he was still the handsome man. The prolonged session of the night before could be traced upon his patrician features only in the form of an interesting pallor. Slowly he took off his hat, shook back his flowing locks, and unbuttoning his havelock threw it open, so as to show to advantage the black

velvet jacket beneath. Then he knit his brows and — still without a word of salutation — favored Fräulein Marie from the Markgrafenstrasse with a critical examination. At last he opened the conversation with the singular question,

“Is this young lady a member of the family?” Then, as the bewildered Florian answered only by a stare, he continued elucidatingly,

“I mean is the young lady a near relative of yours, since I find her here in this, hm — somewhat intimate situation — ?”

“Hey? What’s that you say?” exclaimed the indignant Marie. “What are you givin’ me? I’m a respectable girl, do you understand that? That’s what I get for my good nature! And you stand there, Herr Mayr, and don’t say a blessed word, and let me be insulted right here in your own house! Oh, well, that’s all right! I can go home and tell Fräulein Thekla what kind of a gentleman you are, and what goin’s-on you have here! And all your serious intentions won’t do you any good after this, I can tell you. Good day, Herr Mayr! Any other message you want to send?”

“I say, get out of here, will you?” shouted Herr Mayr in a rage. “And you tell your Fräulein that I am very sorry she keeps a monkey for a maid. So! Now we two have done with each other!”

“What did you say? *Monkey*, did you say?” screamed the girl in the open door. “You will find it hard enough to speak with our Fräulein again; you’d better give up all hopes of that! That’s over with!” She shook her umbrella at Florian threateningly, and then, as he made a motion to accelerate her exit, she hurried out and slammed the door behind her.

Florian staggered to the lounge, giving expression as he went to a general but forcible condemnation of the whole weaker sex. He took the wet towel and wound it round his head like a turban. Then he lay upon the lounge staring ruefully before him.

Toby Tomatschek advanced slowly, leaned one hand on the table in front of the sofa and said in solemn tones, "You appear to be a very dangerous kind of Don Juan."

"Who, me?" said Florian languidly. "Well I'll tell you what, my dear Herr Tomatschek, if you feel so well after the affair of last night, I congratulate you sincerely; for my part, I am not at all in the mood for bad jokes."

"Neither am I," replied the handsome man with ominous severity. "I have come here to-day, sir, to ask you whether you intend to marry my daughter."

"Wha-a-a-t? By no manner of means! Nothing is further from my mind, my dear Herr Tomatschek!" groaned Florian, writhing about on the sofa with an expression of misery. "Oh Lord, my head! — Where did you get hold of that idea?"

Toby Tomatschek's noble forehead flushed, but before he had time to give tongue to his indignation, the door was thrown open and upon the threshold, muff in one hand and umbrella held threateningly on high in the other, stood Fräulein Marie from the Markgrafenstrasse, behind whom in the hall the group of Stoltenhagen ladies and the servant girl were visible.

"There's just one thing more I want to tell you, Herr Mayr!" yelled the indignant maid in tones rather less melodious than vehement, at the suffering Florian; "I ain't used to such treatment, and I won't stand it, and

I'm going to tell my mistress that you're trying to run away with Fräulein Thekla! We've got that in your own handwriting. So, Herr Mayr, now good-by! I don't want anything more to do with such a gentleman as you are!" Bang! flew the door to — a short excited exchange of words without, and then bang! went the outside door.

After that all was silence, but only for a few seconds. Then Toby Tomatschek, seizing the chair in front of him, raised it a few inches and smashed it down upon the floor so hard that one of its rickety legs broke off short. And this he did merely to give expression to his bold assertion that Florian Mayr was a very dangerous Don Juan.

But Florian plucked the turban from his head and gripped his wet, dishevelled hair with his ten fingers as if he would pull it out.

"That's nothing more or less than an infamous lie!" he cried in despair. "Do I look like a Don Juan? Great heavens and earth, am I crazy or are you? Just tell me that!"

"Sir, have you no conscience at all?" thundered the "violin-king," as he gathered his havelock together with his left hand and raised the fore-finger of his right with a threatening gesture. "Or is your memory as short as all that? Here is one young lady whom you intend to abduct, while my daughter, sir, you're trying to seduce. You do not seem to be aware with whom you have to do, Herr Mayr. I, whom you see standing before you now, I have played before all the crowned heads of Europe. This scarf-pin was given to me by the Empress Eugénie. No one shall make up to my child with impunity, sir!"

"Who in the devil wants to make up to her?" queried Florian with a sigh.

"You!" shouted the "violin-king" with a crushing look. "You have not even forborne to communicate your wicked intentions to my child herself."

At this a smile flitted across Florian's worried features. He leaned over the table and gave a tug at the handsome Tomatschek's havelock. "Look here, that's a pretty good joke. That wasn't me at all, that was the baron!"

"The baron! — hm,— are you quite sure of that?" Herr Tomatschek became suddenly reflective.

"I am, of course I am; I heard Fräulein Badacs as she—" Here Florian stopped suddenly, the thought occurring to him that he should be careful about getting ladies into trouble. With a view to changing the subject he called the outraged father's attention to the fact that he had not yet breakfasted and felt a keen appetite for a cup of coffee. Herr Tomatschek nodded in an absent-minded kind of way and sat down on the nearest chair, where he buried himself in thought, while Florian called for the hot water and made preparations for breakfast.

Herr Tomatschek crossed his legs and leaned his Apollo-like chin in his hands. "It did seem to me," he remarked musingly, "as if my daughter made a certain impression on the baron."

"I should think so, a very decided one," rejoined Herr Mayr quietly.

"Hm! And you can swear he used the expression 'make up' to her?"

"Heaven forbid! Where did you get that story about making up to her, anyhow?"

"My daughter told me last night as we were going home that you said to her in so many words: 'just do me the favor to make the acquaintance of one real man before you talk such nonsense about men in general. How would you like the experience of being led astray by a jolly good fellow?' Yes indeed, Herr Mayr, that's what you said to her! And when my daughter naturally answered in the negative, you replied that that was greatly to be regretted! Do you hear? *Greatly to be regretted!*"

"My dear Herr Tomatschek," said Florian, "can you remember so exactly what was said last night? I can't, particularly anything that happened after two o'clock in the morning. But I'm very sure I didn't say that, and if I did I didn't mean it. And then it wouldn't be at all impossible that your daughter mixed me up with the baron. We don't look alike, that's true, but Lord bless me, after so many bottles —"

"You don't mean to assert that my daughter was intoxicated!" exclaimed Herr Tomatschek, giving his handsome head a toss.

"Well, if not, all I've got to say is that I have a tremendous respect for your daughter's head! In that case she can stand more than I can, for I was most certainly tight, there's no doubt about that at all. Oh, my poor head!"

"Hm," said the "violin-king," and buried himself once more in deep thought.

At that moment the niece from Pomerania entered with the hot water. She looked extremely discomposed and her eyes were red and swollen. Evidently she had been weeping. With trembling hands she set the coffee-tray on the table in front of Florian and started to beat

a hasty retreat; but Florian caught her by the arm and said, "For Heaven's sake, how you look! What's the matter out there? Have you had a scrap with your Aunt, or what? You might say good-morning at least."

The girl jerked herself away sharply, burst into tears and sobbed out, "Let me alone, Herr Mayr! I'll never speak to you again! You're a bad man!" and she rushed out banging the door behind her. Quite unmoved, Florian stared after her in mild surprise. With a deep sigh he poured the hot water into the coffee-machine, and remarked with touching resignation,

"That's right! Now even that silly goose despises me. Do you call that justice, Herr Tomatschek? I assure you on my honor, I live as quietly and respectably as an assistant revenue clerk on a pension. To-day for the first time since I have lived in Berlin I happen to wake up two hours later than usual with a beastly head on me, and what's the result? They come running in one after the other, these females, with their heads swollen up like Calcutta hens, for no other earthly purpose than to cast their contempt in my very teeth! I claim that's not justice — it's an outrage, I claim! And as if that were not enough, you appear too, like a regular Odoardo, and call me a diabolical Don Juan and demand that I marry your daughter! I tell you, Herr Tomatschek, as far as I am concerned all the females I know can go to the devil! Yes, my dear Herr Tomatschek and your daughter included! — But no offence! — I suppose you've already had breakfast? But perhaps I may offer you a drink — I've got some fine old liqueur here."

The "violin-king" showed no further resentment.

On the contrary he accepted the liqueur with thanks, and Florian sat down with him and ate his simple breakfast. As he proceeded, his spirits rose somewhat. The love for his fellow man that was in him gradually awoke, and he regarded benevolently the handsome Toby, careworn and dismal, with his noble head resting on his left hand staring into the empty cordial-glass.

"Will you have another?" inquired Florian pleasantly.

Herr Tomatschek merely nodded. Even after disposing of the second glass he still preserved silence. He licked his lips, carefully wiped his black mustache, took a tula cigarette-case from his pocket and lit a cigarette. Then at last he found his tongue.

"Would you advise me to call on the baron?" he asked with gloomy gravity.

"What for?" said Florian, "What do you want of him? Don't want to touch him for a loan, do you? I don't believe he's got more than enough for himself."

"Touch him for a loan!" exclaimed the "violinking" indignantly. "I was not thinking of that — quite yet. I mean whether you think it correct for me to challenge him. As you are of the opinion that he insulted my daughter last night, it is certainly my duty, as a man and a father, to demand satisfaction."

"Hm, yes," observed Florian, wagging his head doubtfully. "It's quite possible that you might impress the baron tremendously in that way; but I can't see how it would do you any good, for I don't believe the baron, as the father of a numerous family, would find any particular pleasure in a pistol duel."

"What! The baron is married?" exclaimed the

handsome Toby, pulling a long face. "Do you know that for certain?"

"Fräulein Badaacs told me about it last night. You see he made a foolish marriage when he was young, as most artists do anyhow, and he had the bad luck to get hold of the stupidest and most abominable woman on earth. He's joined eleven clubs already, just to have an excuse for going out every night, because the baroness makes things altogether too hot for him at home. I'm sorry for the man. In my opinion he could do quite different work and command a far better position if he hadn't been fool enough to —"

"Oh, what do I care about the baron and his family affairs!" interrupted Herr Tomatschek gruffly. He rose from his chair, threw off his havelock and strode several times up and down the room. Then, stopping in front of Florian, he pointed at the empty glass and said, "You might give me another drop of your harmless liqueur."

Florian hastened to fulfill his wish. Herr Tomatschek emptied the glass as he stood, and then laid his well manicured hand heavily on the shoulder of his young friend. He drew a deep sigh and said, "I assure you, Herr Mayr, it is an exalting thought to be the father of a genius!"

"Indeed, indeed! Is Fräulein Libussa a genius?" queried Florian without any particular interest.

"I assure you, Herr Mayr, she is a genius!" insisted the "violin-king," giving Florian's shoulder a vigorous squeeze. "But she is my only child, and her never-to-be-forgotten mother died when she was hardly ten years old. From that time the child has had to share with me my wandering life. Of course, she could

not be sent to school any longer. I became her only teacher, and reading had to do the rest. She developed with extraordinary rapidity, both in body and mind. She has grown to be a beauty; you will certainly acknowledge that, Herr Mayr?"

"Why certainly," replied Florian. "She looks like you!"

"To be sure, that's what everybody says," continued the handsome man, running his fingers through his luxuriant hair with a self-satisfied smile. "You see, Herr Mayr, here comes the question that I wanted to ask you: what am I going to do with the girl now? What is to become of the daughter of the poor minstrel? I assure you this question is the torture of my sleepless nights. Can you give me answer to it, Herr Mayr?"

Florian thought a moment and then said, "Well, if your daughter is such a genius, what can she do?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, I should think she must have an inclination for art or science or something? Is she musical?"

"Prodigiously! But she has learned no instrument."

"Well, hasn't she any voice?"

"Oh, a sweet voice, an enchanting voice, but small, small, very small."

"Indeed! So there's no chance in that direction. Hm, hm—and hasn't she shown any other inclinations?"

"Oh, yes, for the ballet. But that's over now; she has risen above the ballet. She has a phenomenal talent for acting, but she despises the shallow world of the stage."

"So, so. Well, how would it do to make an author out of her?"

"Oh, Herr Mayr, I assure you she is simply born for that!" cried Herr Tomatschek with enthusiasm. "But unfortunately she is not quite sure of her orthography; and besides she is altogether too fiery and too ambitious to stand the tedious, tiresome struggle of authorship. But she has ideas sometimes — simply marvelous!"

Here Florian lost his patience. He sprang up and cried out, "Great Heavens, my dear Herr Tomatschek, that's all very well, but if she doesn't know anything, and can't do anything, or won't, where in the world does her genius come in?"

"Within, my dear young friend," replied Toby impressively. "It is her great heart, you know; her whole soul is full of the loftiest thoughts and the most refined sentiments. The creative artist whose muse she may be fated to become is surely destined to conquer the world,—that's a dead certainty in my mind!"

Florian was nearly in despair.

"If you're so sure of that, Herr Tomatschek, why don't you wait until the creative artist discovers his muse for himself?"

"Ah, but that is just the tragic element in our life. We do not possess the means of waiting," cried Herr Tomatschek with a sigh of distress. "Oh, my God, my God, will no one relieve me of this care? My dear young friend, you can surely see that I am wearing myself out. Do you not know of somebody who for a while at least would adopt my child or — or something like that?"

Florian seized his head in both hands. "Stop, Herr

Tomatschek, do stop, for the Lord's sake! I was feeling quite well, and now you've set my head to aching again. How can I help you, a young fellow of twenty-three years, and a poor devil at that? Go and ask the baron; perhaps he knows more about such things."

The "violin-king" cast a look of majestic scorn upon Florian Mayr, shook his glossy locks, and threw his long havelock over his shoulders. "I have been mistaken in you," he said, arching his eyebrows. "You have no feeling for the cares of a father. Pardon my intrusion. Good morning." He reached for his hat and strode towards the door. On the threshold he stopped, thought for a moment, and turned round again. "I beg your pardon, Herr Mayr; you said a moment ago that the baron's marriage was a very unhappy one. Do you think it possible that he might eventually care to get a divorce?"

"Well, why not? Ask him yourself."

"Hm, yes, but I can't go and ask him such a question in the bosom of his family."

"Very well then, my dear Herr Tomatschek, why won't you send him a registered letter?" cried Florian completely out of patience.

The "violin-king" perceived the irony. He drew himself up, clapped his plush hat upon his head, and left the room with a gesture of disdain.

The good Florian Mayr had of very truth reason to doubt the existence of the moral constitution of the world. Good heavens, how did other young men of his age behave, and especially young artists, furnished-room young men, without family, without cares, without duties? What happened to them when they went in for a good time, wasted their father's money, and paid

no attention whatever to any of the Ten Commandments, save perhaps the fifth and the seventh? Nothing happened to them. On the contrary the wilder they were, the more reputation and honor they gained, and particularly with young ladies.

He, on the other hand, had hardly ever jumped over the traces, had always been a pattern of industry and dutifulness, had cost his parents not a penny for years, and proceeded on his way with his eyes fixed steadfastly on the ideals of his art. And what now was his reward? A single night passed in the company of jolly and interesting companions and good wine had brought upon him the contempt of a whole lot of otherwise well-disposed people. And the events of this gray morning were only a promising prelude to an edifying concert of nothing but misfortunes. In the course of the next few weeks no less than four families dispensed with his services as piano-teacher for their daughters. As if by appointment the health of all these young ladies suddenly became so impaired that their physicians forbade them to play the piano. Only one of the mothers was honest to declare the real reason for this step, namely, that Frau Burmester had warned them against him as an ill-bred, and more than that, an unscrupulous person who would not hesitate to misuse a position of trust to deceive inexperienced young girls. And these malicious rumors penetrated even to the ears of the director of the conservatory. It was of no avail that Florian explained to the director that these slanders were entirely the work of the revengeful Przezwalski. The director was afraid that if Florian remained he would lose most of his young lady pupils, and besides it had been reported to him that Florian

had struck up an intimate acquaintance with his deadly enemy, Toby Tomatschek, who had once attacked his institution savagely in a newspaper critique, and so Florian was released from his position, as professor of the advanced class, on the first of January.

It was a very lucky thing for him that he had lived so economically in his years of plenty and had thus laid up a tidy little sum of money. In this manner he was protected from the gnawing tooth of want for a considerable time, and he used his involuntary leisure in perfecting his piano technique, to which he applied himself with redoubled industry. He avoided society, read Schopenhauer, despised women, and persuaded himself more and more that he lived in the very worst of worlds.

CHAPTER VII

Thrown Out

As time went on Florian began to feel very lonesome and deserted, especially at the Christmas season. His income was now so reduced that he had given up his usual trip to Bayreuth and Christmas day he had spent in the solitude of his own room. Frau Stoltenhagen looked upon this strange hermit life of his since that day of "gray misery" as a sign of repentance and remorse and she cherished the hope that after his recent untoward experiences with ladies of the upper classes he might now perhaps in the loneliness of his heart be brought to look with kindlier eyes upon her niece from Pomerania who stood so sorely in need of someone to care for her. Indeed he had of late, oftener than heretofore, entered into conversation with his landlady and her niece just for the sake of having a chance to speak himself and to hear the answering sound of a human voice; but his relations with these ladies had not on that account become in any respect more cordial,—on the contrary,—the jokes and allusions which he permitted himself and which in the past had always been accompanied by a friendly smile were now not infrequently uttered in a harsh and spiteful tone.

In fact it was only with a few of his musical acquaintances that he now associated at all, although this kind of companionship was the least agreeable to him, for they talked nothing but shop, and maliciously slan-

dered the achievements and character of their fellow strugglers. He had not even thought of looking up the new acquaintances he had made on that Gais evening. So frankly and unreservedly natural as he usually was in the company of men of all sorts, he had never yet been quite able to conquer a certain native shyness which always prevented him in the case of new acquaintanceships from taking the first step. Very often this had been attributed to pride but it was really the dread of appearing obtrusive. Baron von Ried, for instance, was a man quite to his taste with whom he would have been very glad to form a closer intimacy but he never could get to the point of looking him up or even of proposing a meeting with him at some restaurant through the medium of a simple post-card. Fräulein Ilonka, too, he would have been glad to see again. It was really awfully stupid of him to feel any constraint with her, especially as she had definitely expressed the wish to become better acquainted with him from the artistic side as well. Besides she had, in fact, announced that she should call on him. If she really did care so much about it, she might have kept her promise; but of course she had not given him another thought; — after all that promise was only one of those amiable phrases which flow so smoothly from the lips of the careless and light-hearted.

What then was Florian Mayr's astonishment when one sunny morning, a few days before the New Year, the smart young Hungarian, charmingly gowned, saucy and gay, walked into his room and at once began to chat with him in the most unconcerned manner, as if they were the oldest of friends and had only yesterday arranged for this meeting. He was inexpressibly grate-

ful to her for her kindness. His heart expanded under the influence of her droll chatter and he found his own humor again; with ironical self-mockery he told her of all the misfortunes which had befallen him since that jolly evening when first they met. And then at her request he played for her a number of show pieces which she had on her own concert repertoire.

When he had finished she seized him by both arms, gave him a good shaking, and cried out with a laugh: "Why, what in the world would you have! You are a master! Are you not ashamed yourself, you stupid man? What for you want to give piano lessons and be schoolmaster for fine young ladies when you could be very famous artist! I am little famous myself and I play like little pig compared to you,—yes, yes, that was all right, what you said. Oh, but my good Lord in heaven, what frightfully stupid men are in this world!" Thereupon she raised herself on tiptoe and gave him a quick kiss on the left cheek and a gentle slap on the right.

"Thank you heartily for both," said Florian delighted, for her approbation really did him good. "But you see I have no talent for this getting-famous business. It takes money to give concerts and I haven't any,—I haven't even enough friends to fill three rows of seats with free tickets! And who else would think of going to a concert by a fellow with the name of Mayr? Oho! In these days, why, good gracious, every idiot can play the piano! I'm not even a favorite pupil of Liszt! So what's to be done? It's simply out of the question for me to get to the front."

"*Eh bien!* My dear friend," rejoined the Hungarian, drawing his hand through her arm and patting

it affectionately, "then I have to push you to front; all you got to do is to be good and keep quiet, you stupid man. *Tiens, mon ami, j'ai une idée — voyons: to-morrow evening is grande soirée at the Countess Tockenburg's. Do you know the Countess Fifi Tockenburg?*"

"No, I haven't the honor but I've heard of her; she's the enthusiastic Wagnerite, isn't she?"

"Exactly. Oh, dear friend, you must get acquainted with Countess Fifi! You will like it there very much. All musical world of Berlin goes there, court, biggest aristocrats, all famous artists,—very good music,—only modern music. Oh, I assure you, it's only swell house in all Berlin where one can enjoy oneself. *Vous connaissez donc le palais Tockenburg Unter den Linden?* Well, then at nine o'clock to-morrow evening, *et en grande tenue, habit noir, cela va sans dire.*"

"But my dear young lady, I haven't been invited. How shall I manage to get in? I don't suppose that anybody that comes along can walk right in just because he has long hair and plays the piano a little."

"Oh, you can put your mind at rest, dear friend, I do it all! I write to Countess Fifi to-day a little billet doux. I write only that you are great artist, Liszt player par excellence,—absolutely sure to get invitation for you. So that's settled, isn't it? You call for me at half past eight, Hôtel de St. Petersbourg. What you want to play? I write it to Countess."

"Well, let us say: 'The Legend of St. Francis.'"

"All right. So good-by, dear Herr Mayr—*et à demain.*"

With the liveliest expressions of gratitude he accompanied the amiable young lady to the stairs. Frau Stoltenhagen waylaid him in the hall and could not

refrain from asking who the handsome lady was with the costly furs. And Florian gave vent to his excellent spirits by telling her that this lady was a Roumanian princess who had engaged him to make a tour around the world with her accompanied only by a concert grand, so that they might play duets on the way, and by a mameluke as her body servant and a Moorish boy to wait upon him.

The next evening punctually at half past eight Florian Mayr presented himself at the Hôtel St. Petersburg. Fräulein Badacs had not completed her toilette but quite without ceremony she let him come in and look on while her skilful hair-dresser put the finishing touches to her artistic coiffure. Then she threw off the dressing mantle and put on her unusually low cut bodice. The good Florian was struck dumb with amazement at not being put out even during this proceeding; apparently she had no objection to letting him share with the maid who was lacing her waist at the back the silent pleasure of gazing upon whatever objects of interest there were to see. The innocent Florian assumed that this was the national custom of Hungary and he could not help thinking that it was a very nice one. In conclusion he was permitted to help her on with her rich fur cloak and lead her down the stairs on his arm. The Tockenburg palace was, it is true, only a few minutes' walk from the hotel; nevertheless they took a carriage.

It was the first time in his life that Florian had entered so aristocratic a mansion and it was the first time that he had ever conducted so artistocratic a lady up a thickly carpeted marble staircase. He knew practically nothing of Fräulein Badacs but, judging by her

clothing and her confident bearing, he felt that she must be something extraordinarily aristocratic and he esteemed it a great honor to have been chosen as her cavalier for this evening. He had quite forgotten to ask if she had really received an invitation for him, but then she must have, otherwise she would not have brought him there.

Florian was dazzled by the light of hundreds of candles and by the magnificence of the white and gold salon which was still further illuminated by numerous crystal chandeliers and made even more resplendent by the brilliant gay-colored company which filled not only this salon but several of the adjoining apartments as well. This multitude of splendid uniforms, these orders, these rich toilettes, these old ladies in rustling silk with incredibly low-neck gowns, this confusion of many languages among which French predominated, these imposing lackeys who moved with such amazing skill from group to group over the mirror-like surface of the parquetry floor, balancing the well-filled tea-trays,—all this was so distractingly new to Florian Mayr that at first he felt downright unhappy and out of place, especially as he could not long fail to notice that he was apparently the only one who had ventured into the salon with blackened boots and a stiff silk hat. All the other gentlemen in civilian garb had opera hats tucked under their arms and wore patent leather shoes. Had it not been for Fräulein Badacs, Master Florian would not soon have trusted himself to leave the doorway, but this lady seemed to be quite at home here. She simply took him by the sleeve and, looking around meanwhile to right and left, steered him securely through the densest swarm of guests straight to the host-

ess who was standing on the threshold of an adjoining room engaged in animated conversation with a young gentleman in the uniform of the hussars, who surely must be a prince, for he wore the grand cross upon his breast.

Fräulein Ilonka made an elaborately low bow before the countess and waited until she was spoken to. The Countess Tockenbourg was still a youthful woman, a delicate blonde, with a fine rather small figure and a fresh complexion. She half closed her eyes, with a quick movement raised her long-handled lorgnon, and her upper lip curled over her dazzling white teeth in a thoroughly cordial smile.

"*Ah, tiens, tiens — c'est — mais oui, je me rapelle: c'est la jolie pianiste hongroise!*" Then, turning to the young hussar, she exclaimed: "*Permettez-moi, mon prince, de vous présenter Mademoiselle de — de —*"

"*Badacs Ilonka, s'il vous plaît, votre Altesse,*" broke in the Hungarian quickly, for she saw that the countess was trying in vain to recall her name.

The prince entered at once into conversation in French with Fräulein Ilonka and Florian found himself reduced to making various little bows behind her back in the direction of the nearsighted lady of the house. It was some time before the countess, who was listening absent-mindedly to what was being said around her, finally noticed him. Suddenly she looked at him through her lorgnon and showed her faultless teeth; for the present, however, she said nothing but "Ah!"

Florian bowed again and muttered something about the honor which he felt had been conferred upon him by her invitation.

It was clear that the countess could not remember for she said somewhat uncertainly: "Oh, it is very kind of you to have come.— You are traveling through Berlin, are you not? You come from,— pardon me,— whence do you come?"

"From Bayreuth, Countess, but I have already lived in Berlin three years."

"Oh, Bayreuth!" replied the countess, casting an enthusiastic look upwards. Then she raised her lorgnon again and gazed hopelessly at the tall, slim youth.

"My name is Mayr," said Florian, modestly trying to help her.

Thereupon, as if alarmed at this revelation, the countess closed her lips and gently touched Fräulein Badacs on the arm with her lorgnon.

The latter turned and hastened to help her friend out of his predicament by introducing him to the countess as the magnificent young virtuoso whom she had recommended for her musicale this evening. She protested furthermore that *le jeune maître* was one of the most distinguished Liszt players of the present day.

The face of the countess brightened again, and again she vouchsafed Florian a glimpse of her white teeth. "Ah, you come from Liszt?" she cried in a tone which at the same time clearly meant: "Ah, young man, that is quite a different thing."

Florian put his head on one side, shrugged his shoulders, and replied: "I am very sorry, Countess, I have not yet been with Liszt but I intend to try my luck with him soon."

Her upper lip closed down again, the lorgnon dropped, and the countess blinked as she exclaimed: "Oh, you have not yet been with Liszt? Yes,— pardon

me,— that is, you have brought recommendations of the Master himself from Bayreuth? I think you said you came from Bayreuth?”

“Yes, I do, Countess,” replied Florian; “in fact, I was born in Bayreuth. My father is teacher and organist there.”

“But, with your permission, Countess,” said Fräulein Ilonka, coming to his assistance, “He plays superbly! Played for me; I was carried away! You will be convinced, Countess, when he plays the ‘St. Francis.’”

“Ahem — to-night that will scarcely — hm — the programme is all arranged. Pardon me, my dear, I see over there —”

The rest of the sentence remained unintelligible. With a strangely pinched and drawn expression the countess looked out between the Hungarian and her protégé around the salon and in a moment had disappeared from sight.

Fräulein Ilonka was scarcely less put out than Florian himself, but she would not show it. She looked at him with a friendly laugh, took him by the arm, and introduced him to the young prince. But what in the world was he to do with Florian Mayr of Bayreuth? After establishing the proposition that piano playing must indeed be very difficult since most people attempted it and so few ever attained perfection, he found himself for the time being unable to lavish any more intellect upon Florian Mayr, so he turned once more with animation to the Hungarian girl with whom his points of contact were obviously closer. Without impropriety Florian could not venture to disturb them longer and, after listening for a few minutes with a stupid smile

on his face, he stepped quietly to one side and effaced himself.

It seemed to him that he had practically been turned out, for it was quite clear that the terribly aristocratic lady of the house had been by no means agreeably surprised by his presence there. She did not seem to have paid any attention to Fräulein Badacs's letter and, indeed, appeared to know that young lady only very superficially. Under such circumstances it really did require a quite unusual effrontery to bring along without more ado a man who was still more of a stranger than herself. Florian had no intention of thanking this audacious young person for so singular a manifestation of friendship. On the contrary, he was enraged at her and made up his mind to depart unnoticed before his strength of character should be subjected to too hard a test by a well-provided buffet. The musical delights he found it easier to renounce.

He had almost reached the door when in the midst of a small group of old ladies he caught sight of his friend Preczewalski and among the ladies was one whose grown-up daughter had, until recently, been one of his pupils. There — now the handsome Antonine has discovered him also. All the ladies glanced towards him and then put their heads together and whispered and listened eagerly to something, obviously very interesting, which the composer had to tell them.

"That's the way, you scoundrel, now you're ripping me up the back!" growled Florian half aloud. This determined him to stay a while longer lest it should appear that he had run away on account of that black-guard.

A few minutes later a lackey mounted the low plat-

form in the middle of the long side-wall of the large salon and raised the lid of the piano. That was the signal for the music to begin. The whole of the large assemblage flocked round the platform; the ladies and elderly gentlemen took seats on the rows of chairs that had been placed there; the younger gentlemen stood at the sides and back. A young pianist whom Florian did not know performed a fantasie from the *Meister-singer*, apparently an improvisation, and then the royal chamber-singer Betz, an old gentleman with a very bald head and gold spectacles over his extremely nearsighted eyes, stepped upon the platform, opened the ponderous piano-score on the music-stand and sang the monologue of Hans Sachs, "Wahn, Wahn, überall Wahn."

Dramatic music rendered in evening clothes and a white cravat had never inspired Florian with much enthusiasm. He, therefore, turned his attention more to the company than to the performance. He had succeeded at the beginning of the concert in securing a place to stand pretty well forward so that he had a good view of those present. He slowly let his glance sweep along the rows of chairs. Among the guests he discovered the wellknown characteristic heads of some distinguished diplomats, ministers, professors, and artists, besides a number of faces that seemed familiar although he was unable to give them names. There were the typical Prussian assessors and lieutenants among the younger men and the masks of court officials and bureaucrats among the older. Among the ladies he saw a good deal of flesh but little beauty. With the exception, however, of the old lady whom he had just seen in the company of his Polish friend, he saw no one he knew. But stop. Here, on this side, only a few rows from the place

where he was standing, was that not the fat little Consul Burmester? Yes, verily! And at his side the lady in lemon-colored silk with the bouquet of poppies at the shoulder, that must be his spouse. He would not have known her, had she not been seated next to the consul. How could a man who heretofore had always seen the lady only when "not yet dressed," that is, in morning gowns which completely enveloped her in their ample folds, recognize this dangerous yellow-covered structure of bones as the same person? But where was Thekla? Perhaps she had taken a corner seat where he could not see her behind the rows of standing gentlemen. He drew back gradually with great caution. He hoped the consul's wife had not seen him and so he tried to get around behind her. He succeeded and there, just as he had thought, in the corner seat beside her little papa sat Thekla Burmester, clad in a simple white muslin gown with a red sash about her waist. The costume seemed a bit too childlike, but it became her charmingly; the dark blond hair hung from her curly head in two full braids which even on this occasion and in spite of the grand toilette she still wore down her back like a schoolgirl. Her mother doubtless intended that she should look as young as possible. She certainly had made a mistake in her choice of a child to adopt, for that this young girl with the beautiful arms, the fair neck, and the tender fullness of the bosom could scarcely be the child of such a mother must strike everyone who saw them side by side. Nor was there in Thekla's countenance the slightest trace of the consul either. Without doubt she was one of the prettiest, if not the prettiest, girls in the room. Florian's heart

beat faster. He was proud of his Thekla. Now he had to stay. He must find an opportunity to lure her away from her parents in order at once to set her good stupid little head to rights again in case that confounded Marie had caused any confusion there by her chatter. Florian no longer knew on what terms he stood with Thekla for of course he had not been able to write to her again.

Thekla troubled herself about the music as little as he did. She seemed this evening to be making her first excursion also into the great world for her eyes wandered hither and thither with the same eagerness of the novice that he had displayed. Florian refrained from any attempt to attract her attention for fear her parents might catch sight of him too, but he remained standing close behind her so that she should not escape him in the general break-up. Never had music bored him so much as it did to-night notwithstanding that everything done possessed genuine artistic merit. The programme indicated the taste of the audience to which it was presented: Wagner, Liszt, Tschaikowski, Chabrier, rendered by excellent artists, and at intervals some amateurs of the high aristocracy condescended to render a few songs in the lighter taste of the French salon and even productions of their own, which stood in very noticeable contrast to the lofty style of the other compositions. It was precisely these lighter productions, however, that received the stormiest applause. At the close of the first part of the entertainment, a Silesian count with a voice that really was magnificent sang some songs which another Silesian count had composed. The applause was so great that he found himself obliged

to respond with an encore. He chose Schumann's "Ich grolle nicht" with the high C and then in the sibilant manner of the Silesians

"Isch grolle nischt
Und wenn das Herz auch brischt"

sang the handsome highborn gentleman. And, growing ever bolder, he struggled on; his face became redder and redder; and — now — hurrah! up with a bold swing:

"Isch sah die Schlang',
Die dir am Häwärzen fri-wisst,
Isch sah, mein Lieb, wie sähr du ähh-lend bischt —
Isch grolle nischt."

Frenzied applause! The company forgot completely that they were there gathered together under the banner of the music of the future and hence had no right to wax especially enthusiastic over such exhibitions of strength,—and in an assemblage, too, in which every vociferous expression of enthusiasm was held to be rather bad form. But what is to be done? A high C works upon the nerves like any other monstrosity. All sprang electrified from their seats and the count's more intimate acquaintances swarmed up to the platform to congratulate him upon his phenomenal achievement. To be sure, these very same "intimates" had often heard him sing "Isch grolle nischt" with the high C before, but it nevertheless continued to be a cause for wonder that once again nothing had burst,—a thing of that sort deserved recognition. Antonine Prezewalski, who had played the count's accompani-

ment, was fairly crowded off the platform by the irresistible rush of the congratulators.

Florian took advantage of the general confusion, while the consul and his wife were deeply engrossed in conversation with some people in front of them, to tug very gently at one of Fräulein Thekla's long braids. She turned quickly and gave a soft little squeak of fright.

"Come quickly. I must speak to you," whispered Florian hurriedly; then he disappeared behind a knot of gentlemen in order that the Burmesters might not catch sight of him in passing.

The whole company now betook itself into the adjoining supper room, led by his excellency, Count Tockenburg, who had the aged Princess Hatzfeld on his arm, and there on two long tables were displayed all kinds of delicious tidbits. Florian followed close behind the Burmesters in the slowly moving stream of guests until they reached the entrance of the supper room. There he ventured once more to touch Thekla on the arm and as she turned he deftly caught her hand and held it tight. Fortune favored him. The parents went on without noticing that Thekla remained behind. He drew her aside out of the stream of human beings to a place behind one of the columns which flanked the doorway.

"Let me go, Herr Mayr, please," whispered Thekla in alarm. "I'm not allowed to speak to you."

"Mamma has forbidden it, I suppose," replied Florian with an ironical smile. "Well, that's all the same to me. I must speak to you. I must know what that stupid girl, Marie, told you about me and whether you believed it. Tell me, Fräulein Thekla, you didn't be-

lieve it, did you? I was so miserable that morning and I couldn't get my thoughts together. If it hadn't been for that, honestly I'd have written you a little something to comfort you but that fool girl rushed off in a regular rage just because she had made me mad with her silly chatter and I called her a monkey. You know, Fräulein Thekla, don't you, from your own experience, how easy it is for me to lay about me with 'geese' and 'monkeys' when I'm annoyed? But that doesn't prove that I'm really a bad man, now does it?"

Thekla's drawn and anxious face brightened perceptibly. She raised her eyes to his quite trustingly and said: "Oh, Herr Mayr, you're not really a bad man then after all, are you? I was sure of it."

"There that's right, that's sensible," cried Florian delighted. "Now, let's make up and be friends again." And as he spoke he put out his right hand appealingly.

Thekla did not dare to take the proffered hand because all the people could see them, so Florian proposed that they should take refuge in the room at the other side of the salon; he would get something to eat for both of them, then they could be comfortable, and she must tell him in minute detail everything that had happened to her since their last meeting. Without waiting for an answer, he left her standing there, went into the supper room, and pushed his way through to the buffet to procure for himself and his protégé two plates of lobster salad and a heap of small square-cut sandwiches.

In his zeal he had failed to notice that he had come close up to Consul Burmester who was engaged at the same buffet in securing a plate for his wife, who stood close behind him to guide him in the choice of viands.

The two gentlemen recognized each other just as they were both about to help themselves from the same platter; their spoons collided and they mutually begged pardon.

"Ah, Herr Mayr, you here!"

"Yes, how do you do, Herr Consul? Help yourself, please."

"I beg of you, after you," stammered the little man in embarrassment. Then he turned to his wife and called her attention to Herr Mayr's presence there.

Scarcely had Frau Olga set eyes on the arch-enemy, when she cried out in a comically frightened tone, so loud, too, that in spite of the prevailing confusion of voices those standing nearest could not help hearing: "Where is Thekla? I beg of you, Willy, where is Thekla?"

Florian noticed many smiling faces and a roguish impulse made him turn to the consul with the most amiably innocent manner in the world, saying: "Ah, so you have brought your daughter with you? Wait a moment, I'll go look for her." And before the consul and his spouse could reply he had glided swiftly away through the crowd, bearing his forage with him. Close by the folding doors stood a lackey holding a salver filled with beer glasses. He secured one of these in passing and, the two plates in his left hand, the beer glass in the right, he skated over the smooth floor of the music salon to the drawing-room opposite.

But he was not to reach his destination quite without interruption. Fräulein Badacs was at that moment slowly approaching the supper room accompanied by the princely lieutenant of hussars and she called out to Florian: "*Tiens*, dear friend, are you looking for

me? Have you brought me something nice to eat?" So saying, she seized one of the leberwurst sandwiches which instantly disappeared in her large mouth.

With a quick movement Florian put the plate out of her reach and said: "Hands off! Fräulein, that's not for you."

"Ah! What does Serene Highness think?" said Fräulein Ilonka, turning to her companion. "A fine cavalier, this Herr Mayr! *Moi, je l' ai introduit ici — et par conséquence il fait la cour à une autre! Que c'est drôle, n'est-ce pas?*"

"Don't let that put you out, my dear madam," said the prince in the harsh nasal tone of the Prussian guardsman. "I shall try to afford you some slight compensation for your painful loss."

Florian purposely disregarded the irony and with a good-natured laugh replied: "You are very kind, your Highness,—no offense, my dear Fräulein, but I've just met an old friend here, such a poor little puss, and I really must look after her first." And he slid away without permitting any further detention.

And there she was. Little Thekla had been obedient and was awaiting him with anxiously beating heart in the countess's drawing-room. Here they were quite undisturbed for it was very far from the intention of the hostess that refreshments should be consumed in this room. Indeed, for this purpose small tables had been placed in a gallery adjoining the supper room. Florian deposited his spoils upon one of the little stands of Japanese lacquer, shoved it up in front of a luxurious causeuse, and made Thekla sit down beside him. The poor child nibbled a little at the sandwiches but Florian had to eat both portions of lobster salad all by himself.

She sipped a little of the beer, too, just to please him; the remainder he drank to her health in a single swallow. And while he was feasting with excellent appetite upon lobster, the girl told him the whole story of her domestic troubles during the past few weeks. Her mamma actually favored the Polish musician's suit, especially since he claimed to belong to the oldest Polish nobility, of which claim, however, he had thus far furnished not the slightest proof. But fortunately her father could not abide the man so that she felt to some extent protected against his importunities. Still it was quite unpleasant enough that this wishy-washy person was allowed to come to the house so often. In spite of her protests she had been obliged to take piano lessons of him but these did not take place regularly so now she was to begin on the violin to which she still less inclined. Her papa no longer had the energy to oppose her mamma's wishes; the long strife had cowed him. She now felt herself completely deserted, especially since her maid's refusal to perform messenger's service for her had cut off all opportunity of seeking comfort and advice from her friend. Nevertheless, although she was strictly watched, she had several times succeeded in making inquiry for letters *poste restante*. But she had never received a single line from him, she had almost begun to believe the calumnies of Przewalski and Marie. "Oh, dear Herr Mayr, you must tell me what I ought to do," concluded the poor child, folding her hands in her lap with an air of droll helplessness.

Florian was deeply touched; but he was still chewing away on his lobster salad so that what he now said in reply did not exactly indicate sentiment or emotion:

"Hm, hm,—now what can we do in a case like that? Why, bless my soul, haven't you got a nice lieutenant or something of that sort around that you'd like to run away with?"

"Shame on you, Herr Mayr, how can you say such a thing! Besides you yourself were going to —"

Florian looked at her in astonishment. He put down his knife and fork, swallowed the last mouthful, and then, taking her right hand tenderly between both of his, he asked softly: "Fräulein Thekla, do you really like me well enough to run away with me? With a rough fellow like me, a common piano player who has nothing and is nothing?"

She made no answer but blushing deeply bowed her pretty little head.

Florian stroked her warm soft hand for a while and then with a deep sigh said while the tears stood in his eyes: "No, no, my dear, just see here; now I like you much too well to wish to lead you into any such folly. When you need a bow-wow to bite and drive away people you don't like, you'll always find me ready but—you must not think of me in any other way. Now about that Boobylausti, you needn't bother your head about him. Here is a piece of paper, put that away very carefully,—and if the fellow don't let up on his fool idea of marrying you, all you've got to do is just to hand this autograph to your papa with my compliments." He took out his pocketbook, removed a piece of paper several times folded, and handed it with impressive mien to the astonished and disillusioned girl.

Thekla folded the paper still smaller and was engaged in concealing it in her bosom when there ap-

peared at the opening of the folding doors a little group of excited people; Herr and Frau Consul Burmester, Antonine Przewalski; the three elderly ladies who seemed to have especially attached themselves to him this evening, and finally the lady of the house herself, holding the lorgnon at her eyes and craning her beautiful neck. Frau Olga Burmester plunged across the room to the pair while the others remained standing near the door.

"Ah!" cried the enraged mother quite out of breath: "So, it is really true! Thekla, Thekla, how is it possible! You withdrew from the company—with— with this gentleman,—Oh!" And she stretched forth her hand imperiously towards her daughter who had risen trembling. She did not honor Florian Mayr with a single glance.

The consul on the other hand felt that his dignity demanded that he should address an earnest word to the seducer. With head erect and his prosperous abdomen well thrown out, he walked over to Florian and said: "May I ask for an explanation, sir! What was your purpose in luring my daughter hither?"

The signs of indignation manifested by the assembled company did not disconcert Florian Mayr in the least; on the contrary, the situation struck him as eminently comical. Going up to the little Herr Burmester, he replied with an amiable smile: "Now don't you excite yourself, Herr Consul. You're not so bad by a long shot as your wife looks, ha, ha, ha! But there's one thing you can depend upon when I tell you: your daughter is nowhere so safe as under my protection. And now, finally and principally, I owed it to myself to clear my character in this young lady's estimation of

certain contemptible calumnies which that handsome gentleman over there has put into circulation about me." He indicated with his outstretched forefinger the Polish composer, *Przewalski*, who from behind the protecting wall of the three elderly ladies was watching the painful scene with a look of mocking triumph.

All stood speechless; only the insulted musician uttered a half suppressed malediction as he cautiously shoved his doubled-up fist out between the two oldest of his elderly friends.

At this juncture the Countess *Tockenburg* advanced towards *Florian* and, closing her eyes almost completely, said in a tone of the utmost disdain: "I have had supper served in the supper room, *Herr Mayr*. My private salon is not intended for that purpose."

Now *Florian* really was embarrassed. Bowing awkwardly, he stammered: "I beg a thousand pardons, Countess, I — don't exactly know how I ought to behave here. When one comes into an aristocratic house for the first time in his life —"

"I cannot remember ever having invited you, *Herr Mayr*," interrupted the countess with icy calmness.

There was a general "Ah!" of astonishment and indignation. The handsome *Antonine* laughed mockingly and even ventured forth from behind his protectresses. "That's the crowning insult!" murmured *Frau Burmester* and *Thokla* snuggled up to her father, looking greatly troubled.

Florian turned a deep red. His throat seemed to contract and it was only with an effort that he was able to utter a few broken words: "Countess, I am — it must be a mistake — *Fräulein Badacs* told me she would certainly get an invitation for me — I was

to play the 'St. Francis'—perhaps the Countess will permit me to play the 'St. Francis' now?"

The countess raised her lorgnon to her eyes and with a look that was fairly annihilating fixed her gaze upon Florian's at all events well-blacked shoes, as she replied: "To obtain a hearing at my soirées one must have more influential recommendations,—Fräulein Badacs has been somewhat too hasty."

"Excuse me, Countess, I couldn't know that," rejoined Florian in a voice that trembled slightly. "Under these circumstances I of course—no longer—wish to intrude. I have the honor, Countess." He bowed and slowly moved towards the door.

The little group closed up, whispering together, and followed almost at his heels. Florian had sharp ears. He heard quite distinctly Przewalski saying to his three ladies: "Really that is a monstrous piece of shamelessness for this Badacs to introduce her lover *sans façon* into so aristocratic a circle!"

Florian wheeled about on his heel and with a few long strides stood close in front of the frightened Antonine who struggled to retreat, but Florian seized him with a firm grip by both lapels of his coat and shook him gently back and forth. "What did you say, you contemptible rascal?" he hissed softly. "For the low-down lies you've told about me, you'll get your drubbing all right; and now you'll insult a respectable lady into the bargain, will you, you infamous cur, you?"

The company was returning from the supper-room. A scene so unheard of could not of course pass unnoticed. Several young men rushed up to prevent violence and endeavored to detach the victim from Florian who had now lost his head. Many ladies too, among

them Ilonka Badacs, flocked in from curiosity to observe the exciting incident from a little distance.

The Countess Tockenbourg was indignant. Never before had such a thing happened in her salons. She turned to a young officer who came up most opportunely and requested him to see to it that "this gentleman" found his way out of her house at once.

The young lieutenant of the guards seized Florian under the arm and whispered: "Come, my dear sir, we can settle this matter outside."

"Ha, what? Oh, yes, I understand. I'm coming," replied Florian, as he let go of the trembling Antonine with a final little shove, and obediently followed the young officer. But after taking a few steps he turned again and shouted over the heads of the whole company: "Oh, Fräulein Burmester, please be so kind and give that paper which you know about to your father *now!* The Herr Consul will perhaps be so good as to read it aloud to the company." He had the satisfaction of seeing the obedient Thekla hasten to do his bidding. Then he yielded to the energetic pressure of the guardsman and moved towards the door.

There Fräulein Ilonka overtook him, and in a state of great excitement inquired what had happened.

"Nothing much," answered Florian calmly. "I told that scoundrel, Przewalski a bit of the truth because he said you were my mistress and had had the face to bring me here with you. The countess has just had me thrown out."

"Hey! What is that? *Teremtete!*" cried Fräulein Badacs, her eyes flashing with anger. "Wait, my dear friend, I go along with you,—that is, I follow you right away as soon as I have played rhapsodie. Wait

for me in restaurant Krczywaneck." And off she went.

Consul Burmester took the paper from Thekla's hand, unfolded it with much curiosity, and as he read it through he shook his head in amazement. His wife was of course in the highest degree eager to learn its contents but the consul could not be induced to give her the paper. It was not until they were at home and Thekla had been sent to bed that he announced to his wife his firm resolution that in the future his house was to be closed to Herr Antonine Przewalski. Herr Mayr was only a rude, hot-headed fellow but this noble Pole he considered a contemptible person and moreover a dangerous character.

At Krczywaneck's Florian Mayr sat until midnight, nursing his just wrath, alone with his Pilsener beer. Fräulein Ilonka did not come. She had, indeed, according to promise, left the soirée of the Countess Fifi as soon as she had played her rhapsodie,— but not alone, for his serene highness, the young prince, accompanied her and he naturally preferred the accommodations at Herr Dressel's to those at Herr Krczywaneck's.

CHAPTER VIII

The Examination

As was his yearly custom, the great master, Franz Liszt, arrived in his summer residence, Weimar, at the beginning of May, and the polyglot twitter of the motley flock of birds of passage that flew about with him between Rome and Weimar, with an occasional trip to Budapest, descended this year with the usual hubbub upon the fair city of the Muses. That celebrated newspaper, *Deutschland*, which owed its prosperous existence to the "fat salt-bone" advertisements of the Weimar eating-houses, published, as usual on the eve of Liszt's arrival, a glowing poem signed with the initials, "A. W. G.," which the local wits interpreted as "*altes Weimersches Gärluder*" (old Weimar chatterer), but which everybody knew were those of that worthy gentleman, the town organist. The next morning as the sun rose smiling according to programme the streets of the residence showed the characteristic change which the Liszt season was wont to bring with it. Pupils, male and female, strolled about looking for rooms or showing the newcomers the sights of the town. Maidens with languishing eyes, from the Swedish white blonde to the darkest Semitic brunette, displayed their gigantic hats and extraordinary toilettes. Pale youths, nearly all of them beardless, with uncannily long bony fingers, and filled with the desire to look as much like the Master as possible, gave slovenly escort to the

ladies and excited the wonder of the Philistines by their numerous little eccentricities of dress, and especially their ostentatious behavior. Nearly all wore gold bosom-pins in the form of medallions bearing the bust of Liszt. One of them, who revealed himself as a Berlin Jew the moment he opened his mouth, wore a fez with an abnormally long tassel, and pretended to be a Turk. Another sweated about in a fabulously long, close-fitting overcoat in order, if possible, to be taken for an abbé. A third had brought back from Italy a light-colored flannel suit with enormous checks, set off with a sash of red silk, which threw the town lasses of Weimar into no little excitement. Every two of these demi-gods dragged as a rule one nymph about with them by the arm. They called their comrades to the window by whistling musical motifs, mostly from Wagner, and carried on long conversations with them, even from the other side of the street if that happened to be more convenient. And at noon it was very lively indeed in the pianistic gardens of the restaurants where the many round tables were spread. Everybody laughed, chattered, sang, and screamed together in a wild turmoil of languages, in which, however, German, French, and Russian appeared to be the most prominent. It was just as when the swallows come back with their ear-splitting uproar and take possession of the old nests or set to work to build new ones.

In the garden of the Hotel Chemnitius a particularly large, vociferous, and motley crowd of Lisztites of both sexes had gathered together at table to celebrate the opening of the summer season with a May-bowl; and the jollity of this symposium had become almost uncontrolled when a young man, tall and thin of figure,

with a narrow, tanned face and deep-set, round little eyes, his long locks crowned with a very high silk hat, entered the garden and sat down at a table some little distance from the hilarious guests at the round table, and unnoticed by them. If anyone ever did, this newcomer certainly looked like a Lisztite. But in passing the table where the revelers sat he nevertheless made an intentionally wide detour, merely glancing at them morosely out of the corners of his eyes for all the world like a psalm-singing hypocrite. But even at the distance at which he sat it was quite impossible not to notice the sinfully mirthful company, and he kept his ears open in order to hear something of their jests and gossip. He had already begun to eat his thin soup when he suddenly started up in his chair as though he had received an electric shock. He let his spoon fall into the soup so that it splashed all over the tablecloth and onto his shirt-front without his even noticing it. He stared over toward the other table and growled to himself in a low voice, "*Himmelherrgottsakrament!* Has the devil brought you here, too?"

It was a woman's voice that had startled the tall youth in this manner, and this voice belonged without any doubt whatever to Fräulein Ilonka Badacs. Right enough, there she was in the midst of the carousing crew. She sat with her back toward him, on which account he had not recognized her before. At her side sat the coxcomb in the Italian flannels with his right arm leaned across her shoulders. He was evidently whispering rather racy things into her ear, for she screamed out from time to time, gave the flannels a dig in the ribs and called out something to the company in her broad

Hungarian German, which was received with roars of laughter.

The lonely guest who gave expression so positively to his displeasure at the behavior of Fräulein Badacs, as he scrubbed the grease-spots on his shirt-front furiously with his napkin, muttering unadulterated Bavarian aphorisms as he did so, was of course no other than Florian Mayr. He had not got on very well with the Hungarian girl since the unpleasant episode at the soirée of the Countess Tockenbourg, and the fact that she had not kept her word on that occasion, but, as she frankly confessed, had preferred to take supper with the princely lieutenant of hussars,—that he found harder to forgive than the social disgrace to which her brazen introduction had subjected him. And as she found no especial pleasure in being dressed down like any school girl by a youthful comrade, the result was that they parted in burning wrath. But that did not mean that he had forgotten her. Quite the contrary! And when he had calmed down a bit he had called himself an arch-boor and a miserable countrified brute. What could he know, the son of a Bayreuth organist, who had struggled along for twenty years in narrow and meager circumstances, toiling for his daily bread,—what could he know of the laws and customs of society? But Fräulein Ilonka Badacs was at home in that world and whatever she chose to do must surely be right and proper. For in his opinion Ilonka Badacs was a lady of the great world, and she was the first of this description to make an impression of any depth upon him, because she united the naïve cordiality of the boon companion with the address and ease of manner, the

wide knowledge of languages, and that urbane and well groomed condition of body and mind which go to make up the real lady. And then again it was to her that he owed the courage to go to Weimar at his own risk without any recommendations whatever. The hope of meeting her again here was not the least important of the influences which had induced him to come. He would never confess to himself that he was in the slightest degree in love with her, but after all she was the only woman of whom he had ever thought with longing, about whose picture his thoughts grouped themselves in sweetly childlike dreams. And now here she was with this intoxicated company of slovenly loafers and slatterns, as he called them in his wrath. He choked down his meal without enjoyment and made up his mind to go away without speaking to Fräulein Badacs.

He paid his bill, clapped his silk hat upon his head with a bang, and stalked by the revelers with averted head. As he passed he heard whispering and giggling behind him and before he had got half way to the garden gate, Ilonka's voice cried loudly after him: "Bless my soul, it's Florian Mayr! Hold him, children! He is very celebrated artist, very dear friend of me!"

It was in vain that Florian quickened his pace and acted as if he had heard nothing; for Ilonka ran after him, caught him by his coat-tails and held him fast. "*Allj baratom!*" she cried with a laugh. "That won't do, my dear boy. One runs not away where sit lots of celebrated colleagues!"

Florian turned round, took off his hat, and made a quick and rather awkward bow, which threw his long hair across his face; then he fixed his little brown eyes

upon her laughing countenance and whispered with decision, "Thank you, I won't sit down with that gang! It may be fun for you, Fräulein — it certainly isn't my taste!"

Ilonka caught him tightly by both arms, shook him and cried, "Insolent fellow, horrid! What a stupidity again!" And she drew him to the nearest unoccupied table, pushed him down upon a chair, and seated herself opposite him. Planting her elbows on the table so that the wide sleeves of her thin dress showed her full, white fore-arms, she leaned her good-natured, mirthful face, which was still altogether too much powdered, upon her hands and made a ridiculous grimace.

"Well, is Herr Florian still very angry about little, small prince? I swear that I do not love him, not so much!" And she blew across the palm of her outstretched hand.

Florian had to smile in spite of himself; she looked really too droll. He replied in a very much milder tone of voice, "I'll tell you what; I don't care much about the prince, but that crowd there — Are they all really pupils of Liszt? May the Lord forbid!"

"Oh, dear friend," said Ilonka soothingly, "What difference makes it? They are all very nice people; little stupid, little crazy, little in love — all no money, and always happy! I go not usually with them. I live Hôtel Erbprinz, eat table d'hôte with the finest company, *crème de la crème*! But to-day is the first time in Weimar and the good colleagues invited me. I cannot be boorish fellow!"

"I see, yes," murmured Florian in embarrassment, with a not altogether intelligent expression in his face. "Of course, I have no right to dictate to you, and there

can be no question of being angry of course ; for anyhow, I am — of course —” but he did not know how to proceed.

She laughed and stretched her right hand over the table almost under his very nose, calling out playfully, “ Then apologize, kiss pretty little hand — be very good ! ”

He bent over her hand and touched it lightly with his lips pursed-up comically without taking it in his, blushing at the same time like a bashful boy. The reconciliation was thus outwardly sealed, but nevertheless he obstinately refused to sit down with the merry-makers, because before he knew whether the Master would accept him as a pupil or not he was not in a frame of mind to make new acquaintances. He was as excited as a school boy before an examination at the thought that perhaps to-day he would stand before the venerated Master and be asked to play something for him.

Fräulein Ilonka proposed that she should introduce him to Liszt, but at this he nearly became rude again and he reminded her of the evil results of her introduction to the Countess Tockenburg. At that she let the obstinate fellow go.

Florian returned to his hotel, took a short nap, and then brushed his black suit carefully, ironed his silk hat and put on a clean collar, in order to appear worthily before his idol.

He inquired his way to the Hofgärtnerei in the Marienstrasse, and, having found it, wandered slowly up and down at least a half a dozen times in front of the plain yellow building, gazing up at the windows of the first story like a love-sick swain. He could not mus-

ter up courage to go in and simply inquire whether the Master was at home or not; and so he stood there, faint-hearted and hesitating, and whenever people came by he took another turn up and down in order not to appear like a suspicious character. At last a girl appeared at the door, who had the appearance of a servant, and he plucked up courage to ask her quite bashfully whether "the Herr Abbé Dr. Franz von Liszt" were at home.

The cheerful, pleasant-faced girl smiled at this ceremonious bundle of titles and informed him that the Master was, indeed, at home but could not be seen at the moment; he would probably come out very soon to look after his rose-bushes in the garden.

"Oh, Fräulein, I suppose you belong to the house, don't you?" asked Herr Mayr, his courage rising a bit.

"Why yes, of course," replied the girl merrily: "Why, I am Pauline."

Florian had no idea of the significance of Pauline, but his face suddenly brightened, as if some genius had appeared to roll away for him the boulder that blocked the entrance to the magic cave; and he inquired with a tone of joyful anticipation in his voice, "Haha, Fräulein Pauline, now I'm right glad to hear that! Can you tell me how I shall go to work to get a look at the Master, even if it's from a distance?"

His modest veneration touched Pauline's heart and she conducted him through the house into the garden and advised him to walk up and down there until the Herr Doctor came out. And so he found himself alone in the somewhat restricted premises of the Hofgärtnerei. The sun shone very fervently for this season of the year

in this unshaded flower-garden, and Florian perspired horribly in his long closely fitting coat, but really more from excitement and nervousness than on account of the heat. He wandered about in the narrow paths between the flower-beds, mopped his face and gazed into his silk hat with the air of a pious worshipper murmuring a prayer before entering a church. Hundreds of times he had taken counsel with himself as to what he should say when he should really pluck up courage to speak to the Master, but now, when the great moment was at hand, he found the idea almost too audacious. Even his lurking here alone in the garden, lying in wait for the venerated Master, appeared to him a piece of presumption, and he felt very much like getting as near as possible to the gate on the other side in order to make his escape in case Liszt should happen to come near him. While these pusillanimous thoughts were going through his head, the rear door of the villa opened and Franz Liszt himself appeared, accompanied only by a gardener's assistant. He wore the broad-brimmed hat and the long skirted black coat of the secular ecclesiastic. His snow white hair fell far down over his unstarched collar, and between the bottom of his rather short trousers and his low shoes just a strip of black silk stocking could be seen. Almost without a stoop the tall, hoary figure advanced up the middle path which was flanked with rows of trimmed firs. Now the Master was only ten paces away from Florian, who gazed upon him overwhelmed with terror and awe, as upon some long-expected vision from another world. He stepped aside to leave the path open for the Master and forced himself backward in his excitement half way through the hedge of firs. Then he grabbed his hat

from his head, and, as the Master came still nearer, he bowed literally to the very ground.

Liszt had glanced at him sharply as soon as he desecrated him. He hesitated a moment in an effort to place the young man, who was evidently one of his disciples; but the bow was so grotesque that he could not help laughing. He stopped, raised his hat, nodded pleasantly, and said, "Pchah, you do me too much honor — Pchah, too much honor! Hoho! With whom, pray, have I —"

"My name is Mayr!" burst out Florian, summoning all his courage. He would cheerfully have sacrificed his last shirt at this moment if his name had been anything but just Mayr, and as if to modify somewhat the bad impression, he added quickly, "Florian Mayr, please — M-a-y-r — of Bayreuth."

The pleasant, smiling face of the old gentleman became at once serious as he heard the word "Bayreuth." He raised his bushy white brows rapidly several times, pressed his lips close together, nodded as if with satisfaction, and gave expression to that peculiar guttural sound which may perhaps be suggested by the word "pchah."

"Pchah, Bayreuth! — Bravo!" Then he regarded Florian with a little more attention and asked, pointing significantly to his long hair, "Also an artist?"

The benevolent expression of the old man's kindly eyes suddenly inspired the timid Florian with extraordinary courage, and he replied eagerly, "Yes sir, I am a pianist, but I would like to become a real artist. On that account I have dared —" He was unable to say more; his excitement suddenly choked the words in his throat.

"Oh, you want to study with me? *Eh bien* — Bravo! We shall see, my young friend! Come and see me to-morrow morning and play something for me. Come at eight o'clock in the morning. You are from Bayreuth? Bravo! Have you brought a recommendation from Wahnfried?"

"No sir; I am, I have — I beg your pardon, sir, I haven't any recommendation at all!" stammered Florian in dismay.

Liszt shrugged his broad shoulders and shook his head meditatively. But as his eye caught sight of the anxious look of the young man he smiled at him encouragingly and said, "Pchah, what's the odds? Protection is for the weak. Recommend yourself, my young friend! Well then, to-morrow morning at eight o'clock! *Au revoir!*" He lifted his hat politely, and then turned into the next side path with the gardener's man. Florian extricated himself from the thicket of firs and rushed off half crazy with excitement and delight. For two hours he raced about the beautiful park almost at a run, but without an eye for the picturesque charms of the place. He felt that he was a Hans-in-Luck without compare, a shameless child of fortune, for he had realized so soon and so easily the great longing of his life. In his burst of joyful intoxication Florian did not stop to think that the mere invitation to play to Liszt by no means meant his acceptance as a pupil of the Master. The dread of the examination did not come to him until he lay in bed that night, but then he felt it with an intensity that was frightful. How easily it might happen that in his excitement he might play miserably, and then it would be no wonder if the Master in righteous wrath at his unworthy au-

dacity should show him the door once for all! He would never be able to recover from a disgrace like that as long as he lived. It was in vain that he tried with all his mind to give his thoughts another direction. In vain he counted a hundred and even said the Lord's prayer a dozen times one after the other,—the horrible nightmare was there and would not be frightened away. He was not going to play any dangerous pieces; he would play the "Appassionata," with which he had made a sensation when he was only a little boy of fifteen, and, as the phrase goes, he could play it in his sleep. He went through the whole sonata in thought, tapping the bedclothes with his fingers. No, it was quite impossible that he should suffer shipwreck with the "Appassionata." He nevertheless did not succeed in quieting his fears. Bathed in perspiration, he thrashed about in bed, and it was after midnight before he was able to get a little sleep. But he was awake the next morning before six o'clock, and now his tortures began in real earnest. Sleep was no more to be thought of. No breakfast could be had in the hotel so early, and so he got up and walked about for an hour, only to return more miserable than ever, with pains in all his limbs and even fits of nausea. He drank a cordial with his coffee but even that did not do him any good. His stomach was completely out of order and he was in the same miserable state as the widow Stoltenhagen after she had partaken of his "health-coffee." Under such sorrowful circumstances the eighth hour of this momentous day came to a close, and in spite of all Florian stood punctually at the stroke of eight before the Hofgärtnerei. But he was afraid to enter the house. He was convinced that in his

wretched condition he would play abominably, and he meditated whether it would not be better to take refuge in flight, never set foot in Weimar again, and content himself with the modest existence of the better sort of piano teacher for the upper classes. At that minute the letter-carrier rang at the villa, and the next moment the friendly Pauline opened the door and took the mail from him. As she did so she espied the quaking Florian and beckoned to him eagerly, calling out, "You're the Herr Mayr with a-y-r, ain't you? Hurry up and come in! The Herr Doctor is waiting for you!"

Like a criminal caught in the act, Florian slunk into the house and it would not have astonished him at all if the good Pauline had given him a sound whack on the back as he went by. Laboriously and with trembling knees he climbed the stairs. He was wretched and had a bad conscience to boot, like a thief who steals for the first time and without any talent for the business. If Pauline had not followed so closely on his heels he would probably have turned round even now and made off like a hare. It seemed to him an eternity before he got upstairs, and yet he found himself before he knew it in the large reception-room in which Spiridion, the Master's Greek secretary, was sitting at the window reading a French newspaper. In his confusion Florian made this dark gentleman a low bow, which, however, was hardly noticed by the secretary, who bestowed a questioning look on Pauline and then buried himself again in his paper as the latter replied "that it was all right." Pauline then entered the study of the Master, who sat at a writing-table, gave him the letters and announced Herr Mayr.

"Ah, Bravo! Pauline, I don't want to be disturbed — My young friend is going to give me an artistic treat." And with a gesture of invitation he requested Florian to come in.

Florian was not even able to say good-morning. He made one of his spasmodic, low bows and then stood with cold, moist hands, pale and trembling, near the door which Pauline had shut behind him noiselessly.

"Well, what shall we play?" asked Liszt, without looking at him, as he scrutinized the newly arrived letters, finally opening one which he began to read with evident interest.

"I thought perhaps — Beethoven," stammered Florian in a scarcely audible voice. The Master probably did not hear him. He quietly finished reading the letter which seemed to amuse him greatly, for he smiled as if vastly entertained by it. Then he dropped the letter carelessly on the table and said lightly, "Ah, Beethoven! Bravo!" He had understood after all. An encouraging look from his wonderful eyes and a benevolent smile about the closed-mouth, united with a commanding gesture toward the grand piano, and Florian Mayr sat down at it with paralyzed hands and trembling knees. He touched the keys and played the introductory measures of the "Appassionata," pianissimo, as marked. Indeed, he played so softly that he was afraid the notes could not be heard at all; at least he himself could hear nothing, there was such a roaring in his ears. He could only see his fingers crawling like long thin beetle-legs under the thorax of his huge hands. But these beetle-legs crawled about in a perfectly independent sort of way. He ceased to feel any connection whatever between himself and his

hands. Then he heard from the direction in which Liszt sat a low "Bravo!" followed by a sudden wrench in his hands as if all ten fingers had been struck at once, and suddenly he felt that he was again master of these hands and played away with reckless confidence.

When he had finished the Master patted him heartily on the shoulder and said with a benevolent smile, "Very good, very good! To be sure the piece can be played differently, but your interpretation of it is quite justifiable."

Florian rose from the piano-stool and asked bashfully, whether the Master would allow him to become one of his pupils and whether he thought that he had the stuff for a first-class pianist in him.

At this Liszt took hold of Florian's left hand as it hung from his shoulder, lifted this mighty "piano-stool" upon two fingers, examined it carefully and then said, with a nod of satisfaction, "You have a good hand, pchah — and especially a good head." He let the hand drop and stroked the youth's high, round forehead as a grandfather would that of a favorite child, smiling most benignantly as he did so. "I liked your head from the first," he added. "Just stay with me, my young friend, and come along with the others whenever you like!"

Florian could have shouted with exultation. He could not speak a word, but he grasped the Master's hand and pressed a kiss upon it. Then he answered a few more questions about his education, his studies hitherto and his personal circumstances, and was then dismissed for this time.

As on the day before, Florian rushed out again to-

day into the park and the first thing he did, when he found himself alone, was to burst into tears, into tears of pure joy. He was a lad who had been brought up on hard knocks. Sentimentality was by no means in his line, and the last time that he had wept was when his mother was at death's door. He let the warm tears flow without feeling ashamed of them at all, but he nevertheless kept out of the way of people. Over there by the artificial ruin he found a lonely place, where he dried his face, blew his nose vigorously and burst into loud laughter. He set his beautiful new silk hat on the ground, jumped twenty-five times over it and back, performed a number of other gymnastic exercises,—and felt perfectly well again. But now he began to long keenly for a sympathetic soul to share his triumph with him and he hurried with gigantic strides through the lower park back to the city and went to the Hôtel Erbprinz, which Fräulein Badacs had indicated to him as her residence.

Fräulein Badacs would hardly be visible yet, so he was informed in answer to his inquiry. It could not be possible, it seemed to Florian, that anyone could sleep until nine o'clock on a beautiful spring morning like this. He asked impatiently the number of Ilonka's room and rushed up the stairs, but, just as he had doubled up his knuckles to knock sharply at the number indicated, the door opened suddenly and a very elegant gentleman came out. Pausing a moment on the threshold, he turned and whispered back into the room, "*Adieu, mon chat!*"

As he shut the door behind him the gentleman caught sight of the tall young man in the black suit and silk hat, quickly averted his head and hurried noiselessly

downstairs with the greatest rapidity. It was all so quick that Florian really had not been able to recognize his face. He only knew that the gentleman was slender, blond, and very well dressed. He stared after him with open mouth; he thought he had not seen aright, — but no, nonsense! — he had made some mistake — the number of the room must be wrong. He descended the stairs again rapidly and said to the waiter who had just given him the information, "Oh, excuse me, what was the number of Fräulein Badacs's room?"

"Twenty-two," replied the waiter with a knowing smile.

Florian shook his head and said doubtfully, "You mean twenty-three, don't you?"

"No, twenty-two, please!" insisted the waiter with the greatest clearness.

"Yes, but," stammered Florian helplessly, "a gentleman just. . . ."

"Oh, yes!" continued the waiter, smiling still more knowingly. "That was the doctor — that is, masseur."

"Oh, indeed! Fräulein has a masseur?" inquired Florian, gazing reflectively at the floor and a little confused at the same time, for this rascal of a waiter had a confoundedly knowing smile. "And does the doctor speak French?"

"Oh, I believe he speaks seven languages."

"Indeed! Well then, I'll leave my card here, and you tell Fräulein I'll come back later."

"Very well, sir!" The waiter bit his lip and beat a hasty retreat.

Florian repaired first to his modest inn in order to don a more comfortable costume. In the meantime he

reflected upon the extraordinary affair. In certain things he possessed to be sure a very harmless cast of mind, but in this case he could not quite rid himself of a certain unfavorable suspicion against Fräulein Badacs. Oh, dear, yes, there were masseurs enough! He had heard that very aristocratic ladies were even accustomed to take rubbing-artists of that kind about with them when they traveled; but after all it was impossible to consider his beautiful Hungarian so aristocratic as all that. He scratched his head, cut horrible grimaces, and growled out a beautiful selection of Bavarian oaths, thus succeeding at last in regaining his equanimity. Why should he bother himself about such crazy women's affairs on such a day of happiness and jubilation as to-day? As soon as he had changed his clothes he started out to look for lodgings.

As he wished if possible to live in the near vicinity of the Master he began his search in the neighborhood of the Art School. In the Amalienstrasse, opposite the cemetery, he soon found what he sought, a room on the ground floor, the furniture of which consisted of samples of the skill of his landlord, a cabinet-maker. Everything was of oak and beautifully carved, the pillows and cushions all quite new, a canopy over the bed, and painted beams across the ceiling. Florian hardly dared to ask what all this magnificence rented for; but the room proved to be very much less expensive, although to be sure smaller, than his dreary barrack in Berlin. He therefore leased it after making sure that he would be allowed to play the piano as much as he liked, but with closed windows of course, according to police regulations. As it was unfortunately impossible to get a grand piano into the little room, Florian sighed

at the thought that he would have to content himself once more with a wretched upright. He found that he was not the only one of his kind in the house of the cabinet-maker, for over opposite on the other side of the carriage entrance lived, as his landlord's garrulous wife informed him, a Polish family consisting of a mother and two daughters, the elder of whom also "went to Liszt"; and above him was lodged an Englishman with two grown-up sons, one of whom played the violin and the other, as the landlady expressed it, "did a little bass."

Florian returned to the hotel, packed up his few belongings and had them taken to the Amalienstrasse. Then he decided to try his luck once more with the beautiful Ilonka. But still he hesitated at the door of the Erbprinz and finally passed by it quickly. It would certainly be very awkward to meet this time perhaps the — corn-doctor on her threshold,— in a word he would not see her now. After all it could only have the effect of spoiling his jubilant spirits. He preferred to take a walk up to the Belvedere, where he breakfasted. When he returned it was after one o'clock and he walked back through the park to the city, in an extremely vigorous condition of mind and body.

Near the Tea House he stumbled upon a small company of young ladies and gentlemen among whom, as he went by, he recognized his Ilonka. She wore a very pretty and apparently expensive spring toilette and looked as blooming and rosy as a freshly washed cherub. Hardly had she recognized her bearish friend, when she deserted her companions, and, running toward him, thrust her arm through his and pressed his right hand energetically with both hers.

"I congratulate you, my dear friend!" she called out. "Have heard everything. Told Master that I knew you and you are very celebrated, very rude fellow! Master said you had a *tête de bronze*, liked you very much, you play little like school-master, but very German and solid. And you know, Herr Mayr, what else he said, the Master? You shall give me lessons, just think, me! *C'est charmant!* Ha! ha! ha! I laughed so, but dear Master was angry. He say I play vulgar, *comme un diable boiteux*, but, when I cried hard, dear Master gave me a kiss. Master cannot see it that I cry, always has to give me a kiss."

"Is it really true? I am to give you lessons?" asked Florian, interrupting her charming chatter and at the same time involuntarily pressing her arm closer against his own.

"You like that?"

"Yes, of course — that is,—"

"Ah, what is? Stupid fellow! Say something nice now!" scolded Fräulein Ilonka laughingly, as she snuggled closer to him.

Florian did not know what answer to make to this, and he began therefore, very awkwardly, "By the way, I was at your place once this morning."

"Yes, I heard," replied Ilonka indifferently.

"Were you ill?"

"Why ill?"

"Why, because I met the doctor at your door."

Ilonka winced and exclaimed in a low voice, "*Szent-séges isten!*" [Holy God].

"What did you say? Do you have yourself massaged regularly. The waiter told me the man was a masseur."

She looked up at him gratefully and, smiling innocently, said, "Yes, of course, it was masseur, had a little stiff arm, was afraid I could not play!"

"I say, look here," returned Florian with grave eagerness; "if you take lessons of me you won't be obliged to have yourself massaged by a doctor any longer. I have studied medicine—I'm up to that too!"

"Oh, go away!" cried Ilonka with a knowing laugh, giving him a sharp dig in the ribs.

Florian was silent for a while; then he continued reflectively, "I don't know very much about French, but *Adieu, mon chat* means 'good-by, my kitty,' doesn't it? That seems to me for a masseur just a little, well—"

"Exactly! That's just what I thought," cried Ilonka quickly, knitting her eyebrows drolly. "Very impertinent fellow, this masseur. I am not his kitty, *teremtete!* I shall next time forbid it."

"Truly?" exclaimed Florian hopefully.

She pressed his arm firmly in answer, and he entered the city of Weimar proudly with his Ilonka on his arm.

CHAPTER IX

The Guileless Fool

It was a beautiful day in May and Florian Mayr felt perfectly satisfied with the world and all its inhabitants, — including himself. He had removed his boots and coat and lay comfortably stretched out for the first time on his canopied bed in order that he might digest in complete repose the good dinner which he had enjoyed in the company of his fair Ilonka and many other agreeable associates of both sexes at the Hôtel Erbprinz. His Hungarian friend had found it by no means an easy task to persuade him to such an extravagance for he was strictly economical and knew exactly what his means permitted him to do and what not. But to-day in his joyous humor he was not going to be a spoilsport. He had his suspicions that among those present there were some who had aroused his displeasure in the garden of the Hôtel Chemnitz the day before. At all events everyone's behavior to-day had been entirely proper, in fact, more restrained than one is accustomed to expect from artists. Florian felt that he was in the midst of a very refined circle and Fräulein Badaes, who sat next to him, strengthened this conviction by whispering all manner of flattering things about each member of the company in turn. All these young ladies came of extraordinarily good families; "daughter of his excellency" was pretty much the least; they had received the best possible education and it was necessary

to treat them with great consideration. The gentlemen of the party were in her opinion all "very important," some of them, in fact, downright men of genius, all "serious men and perfect cavaliers." In an assembly whose members combined so many external as well as spiritual advantages, the good Florian felt at first subdued. But on Ilonka's account he was heartily glad to find her associating on easy terms with so select a company. He had, indeed, at the very beginning of the dinner, in answer to the question how life in Weimar had impressed him, stated his opinion pretty forcibly concerning the "clowns, idiots, and grotesque asses," whom he encountered on the street and especially concerning the "disgusting mob" that sat yesterday around the punch bowl, and all these defamatory epithets had been received by the company at table with an interchange of intelligent glances and acquiescent nods. Florian was very glad to find among his colleagues men of such high-minded sympathies and, in order to show that he knew how to do the right thing and appreciated jolly sociability, he finally treated the whole party to two bottles of champagne,—not, to be sure, of the most expensive brand. When it came to paying, he grew quite sober of a sudden and these charming ladies and gentlemen could not prevail upon him to bear them company in their further amusements. The sacrifice of twenty-three marks seemed to him quite enough for one day.

While he was thus taking his afternoon nap, peaceful and self-satisfied, soothed by the conviction that for this large expenditure he had at least purchased the acquaintanceship of some estimable people and probably also their good opinion of himself, the company

he had left behind continued to enjoy themselves, and still, indeed, at Florian Mayr's expense. In fact he had scarcely left the room when all the ladies present began to snicker and the gentlemen burst into loud laughter.

Ilonka smiled, too, but she was a little bit embarrassed nevertheless as she looked round the circle of her friends. "No, now, go along!" she pouted. "You're not nice. What is there to laugh?"

At this a regular storm of merriment burst forth. They thumped one another; the gentlemen slapped their thighs and doubled up in their joy; the ladies shook with laughter; one of them choked herself with coffee and had to be slapped on the back. A very young Roumanian, handsome as a picture, with elegant clothes and good manners, threw kisses across the table to the Badacs and cried enthusiastically: "My compliments, mademoiselle, it was brilliant,—*brilliant!* How you do lead that honest fellow around by the nose! In what old curiosity shop did you pick up that specimen? Holy Nepomuk, what respect the man must have conceived for us! What did you make out of me, pray?"

"*Je vous ai fait prince, mon charmant bébé.* I said that the Ispirescu were very ancient princely house, really entitled to throne of Roumania. Then I said national opposition party picked you out as future pretender for national dynasty because you displayed remarkable ability in earliest youth. But you, *mon bébé*, had renounced for the present throne of Roumania because you preferred to become king of piano."

"Bravo! bravo! *Eljen!*" they all cried amid renewed laughter. And then Ilonka had to relate what merry flam she had put upon their new associate about

each of the party present. She was so accomplished a hand at lying and possessed such a lively imagination that she seized this opportunity to enlarge materially upon the little tales she had served up to Florian and to deck them out with all kinds of half-concealed but sharp points which were greeted with jubilation by all except the one hit.

Meanwhile the waiter with the uncommonly knowing smile went back and forth with his ears pricked up and did some thinking on his own account; had he not, with a talent scarcely inferior to that of the Hungarian pianist, told the good Florian an enormous whopper too,—and so he felt in a way as if he were part of this merry company and to each of the guests he vouchsafed a ray of his incomparably knowing and amiable smile. And when the company broke up, he could not refrain from whispering in the ear of the last gentleman whom he helped on with his paletot the story of Herr Mayr's meeting with the masseur. Of course that same evening all Weimar knew it and from the description everyone recognized the masseur at once: a highly elegant cavalier and a distinguished artist as well, who enjoyed and deserved the reputation of being a dangerous Don Juan. This gentleman heard of it, too, that very evening as he sat at table in the Russischer Hof. He was told that the headwaiter of the Hôtel Erbprinz had appointed him body-physician and masseur to the Hungarian pianist. He was overwhelmed with good-natured gibes but retained sufficient good humor himself to join in the laugh, although he was greatly annoyed to be caught so absurdly in the very first visit he had paid his old friend. As for Plonka she was accustomed to shake off annoyances of

that kind as a duck sheds water. She was very angry at Herr Hans von Oettern, or rather Jean d'Oettern, as he, being half Parisian, preferred to be called, and she swore that she should never let herself be seen in his company again. But that was all there was about it and it gave her no great offense when her associates joked her about her masseur.

But Florian Mayr had on that same evening become a celebrated man. The whole Liszt circle was laughing about him and had already fastened a nick-name upon him. The text of Wagner's *Parsifal* had just been published and it was the literary event of the season; it was of course almost inevitable that Florian should be dubbed "the guileless fool." A strict moralist was, indeed, something quite new in this circle, which was made up, partly of the harmlessly frivolous, but for the most part of the morbidly nervous, hysterical, blasé, and debauched. All were most eager to make the acquaintance of the "guileless fool" and in this way without any prearrangement there was formed then and there a secret conspiracy of all against one. It was out of his easy credulity that they proposed to get their fun and so each wished to contribute his part to keep his illusions alive as long as possible. When finally these illusions should suddenly all crumble to pieces around him, why that would be a fresh source of fun. Ilonka Badacs strenuously opposed the dark schemes of her nearer friends who employed all their wit in exploiting the mad fancies of their friend, and especially the story of the masseur, as subject matter for further bantering. She declared she would never consent to have the good honest lad made the butt of such shameful mockery; she would confess all her lies

to him herself and let him know the real truth about her precious companions. But they were not to be frightened off; not one of them took her threat seriously.

Florian did not awake from his pleasant siesta till towards evening. The Englishmen upstairs woke him. He had slept through the violin practice of one of the sons but now the other one began a vicious howling and grumbling on his cello and there could be no further thought of repose. Florian sprang from his bed and went into the little dark closet adjoining which served as washroom and wardrobe and had a little window opening on the driveway. This little window was open and through it he could hear with appalling distinctness an infernal row, which the Polish girl was kicking up on her piano in the ground-floor room opposite.

"Upon my soul, I can see that this is likely to be very diverting!" growled Florian, as he washed his hands, and he began to consider the feasibility of coming to some understanding with his neighbors about a definite division of working hours that they might disturb one another as little as possible. He tried to write a letter to his father but between the concert above and the concert below he found it impossible; besides it had grown too dark to write, so he gave it up and went out to look for a place to get supper.

He could not refrain in passing from glancing in at the window where the Polish family lived, for they had forgotten to let down their shades. At an upright piano sat a young girl, who seemed at most sixteen, a pale, forlorn looking creature, neither pretty nor ugly, clad only in a dark undergarment and an old jacket, the sleeves of which she had outgrown. To save oil

a table had been moved close to the piano and a lamp placed on one corner of it; this lighted the music badly enough but at the same time it furnished the necessary light for the labors of the other two occupants of the room. These were a sickly, emaciated woman, though still young, and a little girl of about ten. The woman was peeling potatoes and the child, with her fingers in her ears and her sharp little face bent over a book, was doubtless learning her lessons.

The *étude* was now ended and the older girl leaned back in her chair, exhausted; she passed her finger tips over her forehead and pressed her temples with both hands. Then her little sister reached across the table and handed her the book to have her lesson heard. It did not seem to go smoothly, for very soon the older sister threw the book down impatiently and scolded the little one. Then she began her *étude* again. Her black eyebrows knitted with a pained expression; she sat there, with her thin neck craned far forward, while her large eyes glanced quickly back and forth from the notes to the keys. The little girl began to cry. Her mother put away the dish of potatoes, wiped her hands on her apron, and, taking the child on her lap, soothingly stroked her head. At the same time the octave passages thundered and the runs of triplets pearled from the fingers of the elder sister. Suddenly she stopped, staggered up from her chair, and, reaching out for some support, steadied herself on the upper edge of the piano. A harsh hollow cough shook her feeble frame. Her mother ran to her assistance and at that moment the little one, catching sight of the watcher at the window, hurried to let down the shade.

With a deep sigh Florian passed on. His good heart

was always easily moved to sympathy and even in his short life he had had many opportunities to become acquainted with the misery of the lowly, whose forlorn lives contrast so cruelly with their lofty ideals. Never had he turned his back upon such suffering with a mere pitying shrug or a few cheap phrases; he had always made it a personal matter and felt that he himself was that neighbor, in the Christian sense, whose first duty it was to render assistance. At the preparatory school and later at the university, where under conditions of great privation he had studied medicine, and even more since he had begun his career as a musician, he had again and again shared with those poorer than himself what he had earned with bitter effort, although he had often reaped ingratitude and wasted his sympathies upon the unworthy. He had a positive passion for ferreting out misery and wretchedness of every kind among people who in any way appealed to his inner nature and, if they were unwilling to avail themselves of his advice and aid, he was apt to grow sad and finally to become absolutely ruthless in pressing his assistance upon them. What he had just seen through the window touched his heart powerfully; his cheerful humor was spoiled for the evening and as he sat with his beer in a cheap restaurant and ate his sausage, he was all the while turning over in his mind how he could most delicately approach the poor Polish family and perhaps aid them in some way.

When he went home about half past eight to write the letter to his father, which it was important to get off that evening, the two Polish sisters were just coming out of the door. The elder was clad in a gray waterproof, which was too large for her and reached down to

her feet; on her head she wore a cheap brown straw hat, trimmed in shocking taste. The little one clung to her arm and for protection against the cool of the evening had wrapped herself in an old woolen shawl.

The two girls shrank back startled and remained standing, helpless and frightened, as Florian took off his hat and spoke to them. He politely asked pardon for looking in at their window; He certainly had not meant to be rude but he had heard her practicing Liszt's étude with so much earnestness and skill that he had come to the conclusion that his neighbor must be a professional colleague. He hoped they would not take offense at his curiosity.

The older girl looked away in hopeless confusion and did not know what to reply. Her lips moved but no articulate word escaped them. She dropped an awkward little curtsy and walked quickly away with her little sister, who had been tugging at her skirts.

They probably don't understand German, thought Florian and, after considering a moment, he overtook the two girls in a few great strides. "Excuse me, ladies," he cried with a kindly smile, "Perhaps you don't understand German. Popolski, is that it?"

The little one giggled and pressed her head against her sister's arm. But the latter, more alarmed than ever, redoubled her pace and, without looking at Florian, exclaimed hurriedly: "We don't dare."

And the little one eagerly hastened to corroborate: "No, we don't dare, mamma forbids it."

"Good heavens, what makes you run so?" cried Florian, much amused, as he lengthened his great stride. "What is it you don't dare? Do I look like a thief and a murderer that you race off this way? I don't

eat little children. What do you want to be running around for at night anyhow? Won't you let me go with you a little way, ladies?" Still there was no answer and as the girls ran on faster and faster he began to be irritated. "Well now, look here — no offense — but we are colleagues and, so to speak, neighbors; it seems to me we might at least introduce ourselves and answer when we're spoken to. My name is Mayr: M-a-y-r, at your service and my first name is Florian. What's your name, little one?"

"Olga Mikulska," replied the child promptly, "and sister's name is Helena."

"Well, that's something at all events," said Florian with a laugh, "but now tell me, Fräulein Mikulska —"

Fräulein Mikulska paid no heed. She scolded her little sister in Polish and then, turning angrily to him, she said: "We are not allowed to talk with gentlemen; mother has forbidden it."

"Oh, nonsense, your mother is a —" exclaimed Florian, swallowing the "goose" with difficulty. He let the two girls go and turned back in a bad humor. As he passed Frau Mikulska's door, he considered for a moment whether or not to go in and with his customary candor to tell her that he thought she was a goose. But he denied himself this pleasure for the present and resolved to give these Polish females a little more time. Perhaps by and by they would discover for themselves how a respectable and well-meaning young man should be treated.

The next day Florian was for the first time included in the so-called "Swarm" in the Hofgärtnerei. It was Liszt's custom to give really serious instruction only to a very few chosen pupils in whom he thought he had

discovered some genuine musical originality; these came to him alone, or at most two or three at a time, generally in the early morning and he went through with them the pieces they happened to be studying. But the great horde of globe-trotting folk that came together here from all parts of the world and, under the pretext of studying advanced piano playing or just out of general love of music, sought a personal meeting with the Master, these he treated in wholesale fashion. From four until six every afternoon all the artists of both sexes, aristocratic amateurs, and everybody else who on any pretext whatsoever had procured the honor were received in the Hofgärtnerei. There was coffee, tea, brandy, cigars, and cigarettes and, first and foremost, the most animated conversation carried on in many languages. Unless put out by some altogether too impertinent importunity or other annoyance, the Master displayed the most winsome amiability to all, even to the most insignificant creatures, who could give him absolutely nothing in return. His mastery of languages, his knowledge of the world, his comprehensive culture, his lively interest in all serious intellectual effort, enabled him to converse with each individual in the "Swarm," and he almost always gave more than he received. Whenever Liszt began to speak on some general theme, to relate incidents of his own career, to make a characteristic description of some celebrity he had known, or to set forth his own observations concerning an important work of art, the buzz of conversation ceased and all listened reverently to the aged Master. Then with a jocular twist in conclusion he would restore the informal gaiety of the occasion.

Florian felt terribly strange in this company. These

widely traveled people, who had always been present on the spot when anything had been going on in the world, who knew something about all manner of interesting things of which he had never heard, who had seen so many famous men and talked face to face with them, and who knew how to converse about all these things so entertainingly; especially these ladies each one of whom had her own peculiar charm, be it beauty, elegance, wit, exuberant spirits, or only the exotic charm of a foreign appearance or manner,—all, all seemed to him like rare rich-plumaged birds from distant zones and he seemed to himself nothing but a dingy little yellow-billed sparrow. No wonder that the aged Master, who, throughout his whole life from his eleventh year on, had been accustomed to the admiration of the choicest society of Europe, took pleasure in seeing about him this cheerful company of admirers among whom new and interesting people were constantly appearing, and in spending a few hours every day in inspiring æsthetic conversation and the graceful play of wit. What could Florian, the poor organist's son, offer to this great man? He knew well that in knowledge of the world, conversational gifts, and, indeed, in all social qualities he was inferior even to the youngest and most superficial of these dashing young ladies. Why should this proud autocrat of the realms of music care whether Florian Mayr of Bayreuth, this tall, lank, awkward youth, learned to play the piano a little better or not? His courage, which under the Master's praise had waxed mighty, now sank into his boots again and the conviction forced itself upon him that, in order to occupy an exceptional position as an artist and to lay claim to special honor and

fame, it was not enough to possess high abilities, genuine feeling, and iron industry, but, in addition to all that, it was necessary to have versatility and cleverness and a fine polish of the mind and the graceful forms of social intercourse. He assumed as a matter of course that all these ladies and gentlemen had already accomplished more in music than he had and he was extremely eager to hear them play something.

To tell the truth, his mental picture of a lesson from Liszt had been something quite different. More than an hour had already passed in chatter, coffee drinking, and in listening to the fascinating stories of the Master, and no one had yet been asked to play. Now, at last!

Liszt had just been giving a most entertaining description of his acquaintance with Hector Berlioz, when there came a slight pause: a tall, buxom lady, who had thus far taken no part in the conversation but had shone merely by reason of her costly apparel and much too brilliant jewels, approached the Master and, leaning over the arm of his easy-chair, whispered to him: "Pardon me, Herr Hofcapellmeister, before my departure I should like to —"

Liszt had to smile at the form of address, "Herr Hofcapellmeister." He did not allow the lady to proceed but, rising quickly, he seized her delicately gloved hand and caressed it pleasantly with both of his: "Oh, fair and gracious lady, you are going to leave us?" and his glance wandered scrutinizingly over the array of jewels which seemed to have been disposed like glittering lanterns for the special illumination of her charms.

Florian stood close by and was able to catch every word of the half whispered conversation.

"Yes, I am only passing through here," answered

the proud beauty, "but I could not leave Weimar without taking with me a memento of the great hero of tones and of this rarely beautiful hour."

Florian observed the look of pain that crossed Liszt's features at the sound of these horrible phrases and involuntarily his own face contracted similarly. The lady handed the Master his own photograph, cabinet size, in an open envelope and asked for his signature.

"Pchah!" Irresolutely Liszt turned the picture round and round and involuntarily drew down the corners of his mouth. Autograph collectors were always very distasteful to him. Then he turned to the lady again and asked with frigid politeness with whom he had the pleasure of speaking.

She proved to be the wife of Lieutenant-Colonel von —, Florian did not catch the name. And, a little piqued, the lady added that in the course of the last two days she had been there three times without having been admitted.

"I receive only from four to six," replied Liszt briefly, wherewith he turned his back on the wife of the lieutenant-colonel to go over to his writing table.

With a single step the lady was once more at his side and detained him with the tip of her fan: "Pardon me, Abbé, you must not think that you are giving your autograph to one who is unworthy. Might I be permitted to play something for you? It would be of the greatest benefit to me to receive your authoritative —"

"Oh, I beg of you!" said Liszt with a modest deprecating bow, smiling at the same time with a singularly roguish expression, "You are an artist, also?"

The fair one bent her head affectedly and vouchsafed the Master a brilliant glance from her dark eyes.

"*Anch' io sono*—" she giggled, "although of course in my case it is not a matter of necessity. My father was—" and she mentioned the name of the head of a large well-known banking house.

"Bravo!" cried Liszt, greatly amused. "I cherish no prejudices of any kind." And with a gesture of invitation he showed her to the piano.

She sat down without the slightest trace of embarrassment, removed half a dozen bracelets from her wrists, and pulled the fawn-colored suede gloves from her well-rounded arms; then with her feet, which were encased in beaded patent-leather slippers, she felt for the pedals, at the same time raising the hem of her silk skirt a little, swung her hands to test the joints, and then with bold assurance ran a series of arpeggios through half a dozen keys. All these preparations required a goodly space of time and considerably heightened the expectations of the audience. Liszt had resumed his place in his easy-chair and was making an effort to look serious.

"Would Schubert's *Erl-king* be acceptable?" asked the lady of Lieutenant-Colonel So-and-so, née Xheimer, over her shoulder. "In your arrangement, of course."

"Very kind," replied Liszt, smiling most politely and with the gesture of acquiescence of a grand seigneur.

The lady had forgotten to take off her rings. She now removed them and placed them side by side upon the rack,—seven in all. Then at last she attacked the keyboard.

Almost immediately a general suppressed snickering and whispering became audible; even some "Ah's" and "Oh's" of surprise and indignation were heard. All

eyes were fastened upon the Master. With a quick nervous movement he pushed back his long white hair, wrinkled his brow into threatening folds, and opened and shut his wide mouth three or four times in quick succession, but he said nothing; he did not rise to stop this "artist also" who was playing the *Erl-king* in a tempo which indicated, not that the father torn with anguish was bearing his feverish child on a horse rushing like the wind, but that he was taking him to the doctor in a calm indifferent frame of mind on a heavy truck drawn by a yoke of oxen. Soulless and hard, these inartistic fingers knocked the melody out of the keys and the passionate rush of the accompaniment remained throughout the clumsy rumbling of an express wagon.

And that the Master could listen to, patiently if not calmly, from beginning to end! Sunk back in his chair, his lips firmly closed, there he sat, resentful but resigned. The entire company, helpless and amazed, kept their eyes fixed upon him. Shakings of the head, excited whispers behind hands and fans revealed the general disgust. No one could understand how the Master was able to restrain himself and not interfere with a stentorian "*Donnerwetter!*"

Florian Mayr stood behind Liszt's chair, fidgeting with excitement; rage boiled within him and he could not suppress certain flattering comments, such as: "Impudent hussy!" and similar epithets, which he hissed through his teeth. Liszt heard him and shook his powerful forefinger warningly.

At last "the child was dead." The lady delicately touched her face here and there with her lace handkerchief and obviously expected applause. No sound broke

the stillness. In the suspense of the moment the guests almost held their breath; but the Master said nothing; he sat in his chair like one petrified. The Frau Lieutenant-Colonel flushed a deep red. She turned slowly around on the piano-stool and, when she caught sight of the fixed lowering countenance of the Master, she sprang up, gathered up her rings, and as she hastily put them on said in a voice that trembled with angry disappointment: "Pardon me, Abbé, it appears,—it does not appear to give you any pleasure to have me play for you!"

Now at last the Master roused himself. He only shrugged his shoulders and said: "pchah!" with unmistakable contempt. Then he walked slowly over to this living picture of a jewelry establishment, fastened his eyes upon her heaving bosom, and forced himself to smile politely: "Well, my dear lady, you have at all events a very — different conception of this piece!"

He looked about in the circle of his pupils. His face had grown serious and stern again. His glance fell upon Florian Mayr, who stood there with his fists doubled up, obviously restraining himself with difficulty from laying violent hands on the fair lady. Liszt placed his hand upon Florian's shoulder and said to him: "Oh, oh, we are too excited, my son! But temperament is good. Do we play the *Erl-king*!"

"Certainly," answered Florian promptly, "and not badly either, I think."

Liszt turned to the great lady who, still breathing quickly, stood in the middle of the room, and said quietly: "Herr Mayr will play the *Erl-king* for you, madam."

This time Florian felt no trace of nervousness. The

Erl-king was one of his show pieces and besides — *Donnerwetter*, this person and all the rest of them, too, for that matter, had better be taught at once that he also had some kind of a right to be here as well as they! He shook back his hair, pulled up his sleeves a little, as if he were preparing for a boxing match, and then dashed in at a furious tempo, a wild rush that blinded and deafened. Once or twice he struck a false note, a thing which the Frau Lieutenant-Colonel had not done, but that did not matter in the least. The passionate energy of the rendering, the powerful crescendi, the highly effective color contrasts in the gentle allurements of the fairy spirit, the successful differentiation of the voices of man and child by the subtle touch, and the deepening of terror towards the end: it was altogether a splendid triumph and everyone present,—not excepting his professional rivals,—had the feeling that this intensely dramatic piece of music had been rendered with genuine poetic comprehension and that the performer's conception of it had been wrought out with the sure touch of the genuine artist.

When he had finished he sprang up and, his brown face all aglow with ardor, he turned to his honored Master.

Liszt nodded to him with a satisfied smile; then, going up to him, he threw his left arm around his shoulder and patted and stroked him, while with an annihilating look he measured the proud lady who stood opposite, pale with shame and anger. "That is the way we play the piece, pchah!" he said severely in a loud voice. Then, turning his back upon her, he stroked Florian's cheek in a fatherly way and said softly: "Very well done, my son."

The Frau Lieutenant-Colonel So-and-so now had nothing better to do than to beat a hasty retreat. She must feel that morally at least she had been dismissed. Scarcely had she gone when Liszt, turning to the assembled company and pointing to the door which had just closed behind the chastened lady, exclaimed angrily: "Pchah! They think that we're just good enough for that sort of thing!"

The universal condemnation of the lady now found cruel and unsparing utterance. The fine joyous mood was dispelled for the day. Liszt was the first to get the better of his bad humor. His picture which the lady had handed to him for his autograph was still lying on the little table. He picked it up and said: "Oho! That is the property of another. I must not enrich myself by unlawful means. Spiridion must find out where she is stopping. I will write something on this for her to remember me by. One must not cherish a grudge long where handsome women are concerned." On the back of the photograph he wrote: "Presto! presto! Addio! Franz Liszt."

The autograph was passed around and created much malicious merriment. The conversation became general and in conclusion two of the younger ladies were permitted to play. Their performances were correct and in good taste, although in no way distinguished. Each was rewarded by a kindly "brava" from the Master who, seeing Florian's look of astonishment and inquiry, went over to him and said softly with an apologetic shrug of the shoulders: "What do you expect, my son? They are good children, they follow me around everywhere, and really take no end of pains; why should I make them unhappy?"

The "Swarm" gradually departed and finally, obedient to a signal from the Master, Ilonka Badacs and Florian Mayr alone remained. The Master lighted a cigar and bade Florian do likewise. Ilonka knew where the cigarettes were for the ladies and she smoked, too, for company. Contentedly puffing at his excellent Havana, Liszt took a few turns up and down the room, muttering to himself: "That was a stupid affair; but now let's cheer up, pchah, *basta!*" He stopped in front of the pair, his hands behind his back, and regarded them both thoughtfully; first her, then him. Then he took them by the arm, Ilonka at his right, Florian at his left, and began to walk up and down with them.

"You know each other, you two. I have heard,— know all about it, ha, ha! I have an idea in my head for you people: you have got to — hm — supplement each other!" He chuckled with satisfaction and patted their hands.

"*Kissazonyi* Badacs Ilonka, *galambom*, is a little devil. Sometimes the hell fire comes out of her at every pore; now that's when our St. Florian must pour on a little cold water. Ha, ha. And my little dove, my Satanic little bird, she must warm St. Florian up a bit, so as to make him a little more human. Have you grasped that?"

"Yes, Master, understand perfectly," cried Ilonka with flashing eyes and, opening her arms wide, she balanced herself on tiptoe as if she wanted to be kissed.

But the Master waved her away with a smile. "No, no, not to-day; earn it first! I want to see if you can really do St. Florian any good." Then, turning to him and taking him by the hand, he said: "If it would

give you any pleasure, my dear boy, you may come to me every morning at eight o'clock and help me at my work."

Florian wanted to shout for joy at this distinguished honor; he quickly seized the kind hand of the revered Master and kissed it. Therewith they were both dismissed for the day. They took a walk together in the park. Florian was beside himself with joy and pride. Everybody had congratulated him to-day, these cultured and eminent persons who seemed so superior to him that he would not for a moment have dared to compare himself with them. And now he had every reason to consider himself singled out from all the rest, for neither the mysterious pretender to the throne of Roumania nor the Muscovite Boyar nor any other of the whole distinguished, brilliant, and virtuous company that he had met yesterday had ever been asked to help the Master at his work. He rolled in the grass, stood on his head, and turned cart-wheels in a transport of joy; no one happened to be near just then; and Ilonka laughed unrestrainedly at his mad capers and in a tone of profound conviction declared that he was "awful dear crazy fellow." They agreed that he should go to her for an hour every evening. First of all she wanted to go through her entire concert repertoire with him carefully before beginning to practice any new works.

They had almost reached the town again when Ilonka with droll bashfulness asked what he was going to charge her for instruction.

And Florian to tease her a little drew a serious face and said: "Well, I do just as famous physicians do: I charge according to the ability of the patient to pay.

In Berlin I got ten marks from the commonest kind of banker's daughters. Would you think any less of me if I only asked you ten marks?"

"Ten marks!" she broke in, horrified, "What are you thinking, my dear friend? Do you want to make pauper of me?"

"A great lady like you, my dear Fräulein Badacs! You must be fairly rolling in wealth; you must make your curlpapers out of banknotes."

"Oh, my good gracious, what awful man you are! I am poor as a gypsy; one day I have little something, next day I have not a cent. Luck, that's all I got: soon as I am down to nothing then comes something."

"Where from?"

"Oh, lots of ways; some comes from this one, some from that,—concerts, I mean, of course."

Florian looked at her askance in some embarrassment and inquired a little hesitatingly: "But aren't your parents rich? You must come of a very aristocratic family."

"Who, I?" cried Ilonka hilariously. "I tell you: my mother was little ballet girl in grand opera at Budapest. My father,—now, look here, dear friend, that's all very uncertain. Possible he was gypsy chief, possible he was count. Mother says it was count, but I think gypsy chief because I got musical talent. But count paid and that's principal thing. He was dear fellow, the count, gave me very good education, first in Convent of the Sacred Heart and then at Vienna conservatory."

"Hm!" murmured Florian meditatively, still shyly glancing at her out of the corner of his eye, "I think you have something very aristocratic about you."

"Well, dear friend, that's just as God will, possible it was all two of them." And she laughed merrily in his face so that all her splendid white teeth showed.

Florian laughed bashfully and, turning quite red, stammered: "Do you know,— I — I've got to tell you,— I think you're awfully nice."

"Do you?" she cried, clapping her hands in delight. She looked around hurriedly and then suddenly raising herself on tiptoe, she drew his face down to hers and gave him a quick hearty kiss.

The good Florian was quite frightened and looked anxiously about. No, it was not probable that anyone had seen them. He drew a deep breath of relief and, taking her hand, squeezed it hard. "Thank you very much," he said.

She snuggled up to him teasingly and said, laughing: "Now, I've paid a little in advance, haven't I?"

"Wouldn't you like to pay me in that coin always?" asked Florian in a low voice, bashfully bending over her.

She gave him a loving look and several quick nods of assent. But the streets were growing more animated, so with becoming propriety he escorted her to the door of her hotel.

CHAPTER X

An Indiscretion¹

It was a rich and blessed springtime for our Florian. Every day that he was privileged to live in the tiny city of the Muses, within the magic circle of the mighty genius, afforded him as much nourishment for heart and soul, as much encouragement for his artistic ideals, as months and years in other places. He enjoyed most of all the morning hours which he usually spent quite alone with Liszt.

With wonder and admiration he came to realize the aged Master's extraordinary capacity for work, his indefatigable faithfulness to duty and the wonderful freshness of his mind. When Florian presented himself at eight o'clock, Liszt had already been up at least three hours. Sometimes he rose even as early as four. Then he went to early mass, read his breviary, and in the profound serenity of the springtime morning plunged himself in thoughts of the work which happened to occupy him at the time. After breakfast he perused the morning's mail, and, by the time Florian arrived, he had gone through pretty thoroughly the respectable bundle which the postman brought him. The secretary was given a number of letters to attend to, while those of a more intimate character he retained to answer himself. Florian's duties consisted for the most part in helping to examine the musical compositions, published as well as in manuscript, which arrived daily

in goodly numbers, and to write the senders concerning them.

Liszt considered it a duty which his position as foremost pianoforte virtuoso of the time, and particularly as champion of the modern tendency in music, imposed upon him, to examine conscientiously everything that was sent him, and he devoted several hours each day to this by no means easy task. Upon superficial material of the popular sort that was only the product of a mechanical facility he naturally wasted but little time. Stuff of this kind was disposed of with a joke and relegated to its proper category. But the moment the Master, during the first cursory inspection of a manuscript, was able to discover even the slightest proof of originality, of sincere striving after new forms of expression, or a firm command of the established forms of art, he lingered, and set himself to examine carefully. At such times he would sit down at the piano himself and play off the often extremely illegible and most intricate scores as easily as if they were clearly printed notes. It often happened that he requested Florian to play a manuscript of this kind with him four-handed. At first the young man found this extremely difficult and he considered himself fortunate if he only got the bass right and brought out the more important parts. But under the Master's instruction he learned rapidly and much.

After Florian was dismissed, Liszt worked for several hours alone, until eleven or twelve o'clock. Then he made or received visits, and after that lunched, usually at the home of one of his older women friends or at the Grand-Ducal palace, but less often alone. When he ate at home someone or other of his more

avored pupils was invited to keep him company, which was also the case during the walks which Liszt was accustomed to take towards evening, after the "Swarm" had dispersed. The rather frequent soirées which the Master gave bore more the character of formal concerts. To these many laymen were invited, particularly members of the Court circle. The Grand Duke himself was almost a regular guest at these functions, as well as his daughters, the Princess Reuss and the Princess Elizabeth, both at that time unmarried. Upon those evenings when Liszt neither went out nor himself entertained, he spent the time composing or reading. He retired at eleven, sometimes even later.

Florian was happiest whenever, in the glorious morning hours, he succeeded in turning the conversation upon Liszt's own compositions and the Master consented to play them through with him at the piano. The great choral and orchestral works of Franz Liszt were in those days far more than now aliens in the musical world, and were regarded with jealous suspicion. The marvelous plastic genius and dramatic vigor of Richard Wagner had long ago silenced the hue and cry of the musical dryasdusts and completely carried away the greater part of the public. The "Art of the Future" had already actually become the ideal of the present, and yet Liszt, in the production of his symphonic poems and great choral works, though they were born of the same spirit as Wagner's music-dramas, had, in the year 1880, to contend against the timidity of concert-directors, the malice of the critical clique and lack of understanding on the part of the public, just as Wagner had to do till well into the seventies. It was perhaps the only sorrow that saddened the twilight of the life of the

happiest artist of the century, the one bitter experience that from time to time filled even that great, good, forgiving heart with agonizing resentment. Unselfishly he had stood aside when the ruthless, virile genius of Wagner demanded a free road for its development. He had helped with all his powers to even the way of him whom he himself recognized as the greater. He had made known and elucidated Wagner's works with voice and pen, and by means of his own money and indefatigable efforts he had kept above water the exile struggling with want.

Now the other had gone forth a glorious victor, while he himself, who through his own works had been the predecessor and the champion of the Titan of Bayreuth, was still looked upon by the generality of men only as the greatest pianist of the century, but not as a composer of the utmost originality as well,—not as the powerful neo-musician and pathfinder. Therefore as soon as he found that this simple Florian Mayr knelt in touching veneration at the feet not only of the piano hero but still more reverently before the composer, the sympathy that he had felt with the unassuming young man grew into a sincere paternal affection, which found its nourishment in the hope of educating Florian to become an intelligent interpreter of his great misunderstood works, a faithful guardian of his spiritual heritage. And thus, during these fruitful morning hours, there developed in the son of the Bayreuth organist a genuine Liszt conductor.

And Liszt very soon discovered one more extremely valuable characteristic in his pupil, his wrathful impatience of intrusive parasites, the crowd, actuated only by curiosity, that sought on all occasions to invade the

Master's privacy. As a scare-crow, as an inexorably stern Cerberus, and, if necessary, an efficient "chucker-out," nobody could be better than Florian Mayr. With his exaggerated good-nature Liszt was completely defenseless against energetic attacks. He even allowed himself to be bullied into friendship and the intimate use of "thee" and "thou" by several absolutely insignificant persons who had at some time or other done him a service and now made capital out of his gratitude. Here Florian proved to be a perfect jewel. He showed no consideration, either for the fair sex or for name or station, and he carried out the most unpleasant commissions with genuine delight. Neither by flattery nor angry looks nor sharp words could he be moved to indulgence towards people from whom the Master wished to be spared. It was, therefore, perfectly natural that he soon became known in Weimar as the Master's latest favorite, and made on that account almost as many jealous enemies as he had colleagues. Nevertheless people took good care not to quarrel with him, for if he were actuated by the spirit of revenge, he might do them a very bad turn. They preferred, therefore, to flatter him to his face, and make sport of him behind his back; whenever one of them had a favor to ask of the Master he seldom omitted to bespeak Herr Mayr's good offices. But Florian harshly rejected all advances even of the most harmless nature, and he could not be bribed even by the seductive glances of fair ladies. The only feminine being for whom he had promptly put in a good word was his neighbor, Helena Mikulska, although he stood on no more intimate footing with her than on the first day, in spite of the most friendly advances on his part. No matter how often

he spoke to her, he never received any other answer than the same silly, stupid, "Mother will not permit." Once or twice he had met the mother herself in the corridor but she was even worse than her daughter. She had stared at him with a horrified expression, as though he had demanded her money or her life, and had run away with the most ridiculous haste. He learned from his landlady that this singular woman understood almost no German and was possessed of an almost childish fear of thieves, murderers, and ghosts. As for the rest, she was still a young woman, scarcely over thirty, but her helpless and forsaken condition and her dire need stared from her sunken eyes and gave her faded cheeks their chalky paleness. It was of no avail that Florian again and again called himself a fool and wished these "stupid women-folks" to the devil. Their heart-breaking misery went to his sympathetic heart day by day and left him no peace. On this account he told Liszt about the young girl's extraordinary industry and uncommon talent and asked permission for her to play to him, so that she might, when once provided with the powerful recommendation of Franz Liszt, earn her living somewhere. The Master requested him to bring the girl with him on the very next morning, and promised to do all he could for her.

Full of delight Florian hurried home and knocked without ceremony on the Mikulskas' door. There was no "Come in" in answer to his knock but he heard an exciting whispering after the sudden interruption of the piano-playing, and then steps approached the door on tiptoe. Probably somebody was trying to look through the keyhole. Then he knocked lightly again, opened the door at once and entered the room. Right

enough, little Olga sprang to one side in a fright. The mother stood with the elder daughter at the piano and both received the intruder with a low exclamation.

With a good-natured laugh Florian greeted them, "How do you do, ladies? Now don't get frightened! It's only me, and I bring you some very good news! I suppose you will allow me to sit down a bit?" And without waiting for the formal permission, he seated himself in the nearest chair, nodded pleasantly to the elder sister and said gaily, "Now Fräulein Helena, just listen to me. To-morrow morning at eight o'clock you are to go to Master Liszt and play something for him. He will do something for you so that you can get out of your present wretched situation. Well what do you say now? The same old thing again, 'Mother will not allow?'"

Helena turned red and deathly pale by turns and then the two girls talked Polish with their mother with great volubility. That took some time but Florian let them chatter on and contented himself with carefully watching their gestures. Little Olga was apparently the only one who was delighted with the good news, and eagerly tried to persuade the other two to take advantage of the opportunity, while the mother and Helena had nothing but objections and complaints. But at last, as nobody seemed to want to make him any answer at all, Florian became impatient. He took the little girl by the hand, drew her to him, and said, "Come here, child, you seem to be after all the most sensible of the lot. Just tell me what it all means anyhow! Isn't your sister pleased about it at all?"

"Oh, yes, sister is glad — Why, we only came here to play to Liszt, but we have nothing to wear!"

"Oh, if you think the Master cares more about your clothes than he does how you play, you're mightily mistaken."

Olga interpreted to her mother in Polish what Florian had said, and thereupon ensued a new and agitated chapter of lamentations between Helena and her mother. The excited girl stood before Florian, blushing with shame, and passed her hand over her emaciated form, which was clad only in an old brown woolen underskirt and a red striped cotton blouse.

"There, look please, Herr Mayr," she said. "That's fine, isn't it? Mother has the best gown on; it does for us both. The one who goes out puts on the best gown with the water-proof. The water-proof belongs to both also." Little Olga interrupted angrily and, crying out something in a shrill voice, ran to the clothes-press and pulled out all the little stock of finery that was there. She threw the stuff on the table, and then all three went at it, pulling over skirts, waists, and blouses and spreading them out before Florian, at the same time calling his attention to their general shabbiness and the many patches, screaming all the while such a mixture of Polish and German that it was hardly possible to understand a word. Olga praised with great eagerness a white dress which seemed to be still in fair condition, but Helena declared that it would hardly reach below her knees, and she threw it angrily into the excited little one's face.

Florian was quite in despair over these "aggravating females," and at last he yelled out, "Great heavens and earth, go in your chemise and water-proof, if you want to! All such miserable matters are of no account whatever!"

And as the three set up another loud wail he added, "All right, then we will wait a few days until you've found something decent to put on. Meanwhile I'll advance the necessary money if you haven't got it yourselves. The great thing is that you get somewhere sometime. You'll practice until you go plumb daft, and anybody can see a mile away that you're starving yourselves."

"Oh, we don't go hungry much," exclaimed Olga. "We always have bread and milk and potatoes."

"But Lord bless me," shouted Florian, "you can't nourish your nerves with that sort of thing! And you use up more nerves in a month in the insane way you practice than anybody else in a whole year! What are you waiting for? Or have you capital enough to keep you until Fräulein Helena can be thrown at the public as a virtuoso? Don't you imagine that you can make a fortune as easy as turning your hand over. You'll kill yourself before that anyhow, stuffing yourself with potatoes and ruining your nerves. And if you do get as far as giving concerts, do you think for a moment that the public will fight for the tickets just to see a poor miserable little chicken in an old dress with nothing behind and nothing in front?"

Helena listened with wide opened eyes and face distorted with grief, and translated breathlessly to her mother the sense of his words. All at once the two women began to cry, sobbing in each other's arms as if their hearts would break. Florian was sorry that he had told them the truth so plainly and brutally. He went over and began to console them, but they fled from him into the farthest corner of the room. He gave it up with a sigh, stroked the little girl's glossy brown hair

as he went by and whispered, "Little one, you're sensible, you talk to them and bring me word what's to be done. You shall have some chocolate, too!" With that he left the room.

After lunch Florian bought a few pieces of chocolate and all kinds of sugar cakes, and, as he passed the show-window of a milliner's establishment, his eye fell upon a couple of pretty children's hats which pleased him so much that he went in and bought one of them, a large, bright-colored straw hat, prettily trimmed with a broad red silk ribbon. Little Olga was going about in her shabby old felt hat with its dirty crumpled ribbon and its bristly feathers. He enjoyed in anticipation the big eyes that the child would make when she saw all this magnificence and was confident that the elder sister would also learn to trust him and accept his assistance. Near the door of his house he ran upon the Englishmen who lived over him, Mr. Crookes, with his two big sons, who, although they were already nineteen and seventeen years, wore knickerbockers and ridiculously short jackets, which at that time, when athletic sport with its beneficial influence upon male dress still led a very modest existence in Germany, excited a great deal of notice. Florian had not as yet made the acquaintance of the Englishmen, but he had exchanged a few words with them on occasion, so that he might at least say that he knew them. Like all Germans, Florian considered every Englishman who lived abroad as immensely wealthy, and the thought struck him to exploit this Mr. Crookes for the Mikulskas' benefit. After several preparatory phrases, he invited the three to accompany him to his room.

The Crookes, who, like all Englishmen when con-

fronted with continental politeness, fell into an almost helpless stiffness, accepted this invitation wonderingly, and, after they had seated themselves, awaited Florian's next step. For the rest they understood and spoke German very well for Englishmen.

Florian began by asking them whether he might not offer them a glass of beer and this invitation was refused by father Crookes with scarcely concealed indignation. Then Florian took the straw hat that he had just bought from its paper wrapper, showed it to his guests with droll satisfaction and asked what it was.

"Well, that is the hat of a very little girl," answered Mr. Crookes with perfect equanimity, while the two boys grinned bashfully.

"Correct; but where is the little girl for this hat?" continued Florian artfully, and as he received no answer to this question save a shrug, he pointed over his shoulder with his thumb and whispered mysteriously, "She lives over there and her name is Olga Mikul-ska!"

The faces of the two boys wore a queer expression and their father frowned at them askance. He seemed actually to have taken for granted that this Florian Mayr was a very frivolous young fellow, who found a peculiar pleasure in initiating everybody he met into his unscrupulous schemes. He began to consider how he could politely retire and withdraw his innocent boys from this dangerous company.

Florian did not suspect to what extraordinary misinterpretation he had exposed himself, but went on to describe in plain words the distress and misery of their neighbors and finished by inviting his guests to con-

tribute towards procuring the most necessary articles of clothing for the young pianist.

A pause of some length ensued. The close of Florian's speech had evidently astonished his hearers. Curiously enough the youngest Master Crookes was the first to speak. He turned to his father and expressed his most emphatic opinion that the young lady in question was very ugly.

The elder brother giggled behind his hat and confirmed this opinion with an emphatic, "Yes, indeed she is!"

"Please mind your own business, will you?" snapped the old gentleman at his two big boys. Then he took his chin in his hand, rubbed it reflectively, tapped his nose with his fore-finger and by dint of these preparations finally found himself in the position to announce his opinion on the subject. "I'll tell you," he said, "I don't like Liszt, I don't like any of that kind of music; I like Händel, Bach, Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms — but I don't like Brahms so very much."

"Very good, but, my dear sir, what has that got to do with it? I for instance love Liszt above all and everything — but, surely, you wouldn't let me drown if you happened to come along and could help me easily, would you?"

"Oh, that's quite different," replied Mr. Crookes unmoved. "You may like what you wish, my dear sir, for you don't want my money for yourself; but if this young girl wants my money for herself, then she must like what I like."

Florian ran his fingers through his hair despairingly. "But, Mr. Crookes," he cried, "Damn it, man — I beg your pardon! Let's leave music out of the question and

just remember that there are here three respectable women who are simply starving. They are living on milk, bread, and potatoes, and never get a taste of meat!"

"Oh, that is very wholesome," replied Mr. Crookes, wagging his head. "The man who eats parts of dead animals nourishes only his evil instincts and is not adapted for true philosophy!"

Florian was barely able to control himself. With the greatest effort he swallowed an oath at least a yard long, and said with a nervous laugh, "So you won't do anything? Well, all right. I have only to thank the gentlemen for listening to me so patiently. As a dead-carcass-eating Lisztite I must be in your eyes an object of physical and moral disgust!"

Mr. Crookes smiled as pleasantly as the long leathery wrinkled character of his face allowed and remarked,

"Oh, my dear sir, you are not lost yet; it's never too late to mend, we say in English. I'll send you a few pamphlets and I hope that you will improve. Furthermore I would like to advise you regarding that young girl. Follow my principle never to interfere! Good morning, my dear sir, I am very glad to have met you!" He gave Florian's hand a vigorous shake, the two young gentlemen silently followed his example and then all three took their departure.

For a few seconds Florian stared at them with open mouth and then broke into boisterous laughter. Suddenly came a loud knock at the door and Mr. Crookes senior reëntered the room. Standing on the threshold with the door-knob in his hand he spoke as follows: "Oh, I forgot — I'll do something after all! I'll ask the spirits whether these girls will really starve to

death; and if the spirits tell me that these girls will really starve to death, then I'll give them something for bread and milk." With a nod of the head he backed out without waiting to note the effect of his words.

Florian threw himself upon his lounge and kicked out wildly with his legs to give vent to his feelings. He had never seen such lunacy in all his life before.

As nothing was to be hoped for from this quarter in the furtherance of his philanthropic plans, he cast about in other directions for assistance. Suddenly Ilonka Badaes occurred to him. Well, that he had not thought of her in the first place! She fairly threw her money about, and she had a good heart too! The relations between them just at this time were extremely pleasant. Florian's instruction was a source of great delight to both. She was very industrious and never took his sometimes harsh criticism amiss, and he was proud of having such a highly gifted pupil, almost forgetting in the enthusiasm of his artistic work that he was a bit in love. He got his kiss regularly at the end of the lesson and sometimes two or three extra ones, but it had become such an established custom with them that they had finally come to regard such little expressions of affection as friendly jests. Ilonka, the Good, must help, and with this idea in his head he dozed off into his midday siesta.

He was awakened by a faint knock at the door. "Come in!" he called, springing to his feet and rubbing his eyes. There stood little Olga Mikulska on the threshold. She shut the door behind her quickly and made an embarrassed little curtsy.

"Well, how do you do, child?" called out Florian

cheerily. He took her hand and led her to the table where the hat and the sweetmeats lay.

"Before you say anything open your mouth wide," he cried to the hesitating child. She did as he told her and he stuffed a large piece of cake into her mouth. The little girl chewed and her big eyes shone with delight as she ate. She could hardly believe that this magnificence was all for her, and particularly the beautiful hat which the kind gentleman placed upon her head! She let him stuff piece after piece of cake into her mouth and lead her up to the mirror where she could admire her finery.

Florian had, indeed, to confess to himself that the fine hat did not go at all with the little girl's miserable rags, and it was impossible to make anything out of her ordinary face with its bad complexion and her two blond braids hanging down behind in peasant fashion, but he nevertheless enjoyed the speechless surprise of the poor child and told her that the hat became her beautifully.

It was not until Olga had eaten up all the cake that he asked her what decision her sister Helena had reached.

"*Boje pomoz mnie* — sister is stupid," whispered Olga with a droll gesture of deprecation, "and mother is! . . ." Then she hesitated.

"Mother is stupid too!" completed Florian with a satisfied nod of assent. "Well, and what does mother say?"

"Mother says ladies must not take presents from gentlemen, for it is dangerous!"

"That's a very wise precept of mother's," teased Florian, imitating the child's accent. "But I'll tell

you what, little one, nobody's going to give you anything who doesn't really want to help you!"

"Why?"

"Lord bless you, because your looks are not that way, you poor things!" murmured Florian half to himself. The child looked up at him without comprehending and he patted her pale cheeks tenderly. He asked Olga many things about their circumstances, and it was not difficult to induce her to talk. The father, Herr von Mikulski, had been staff captain in the Russian army, but had been exiled to Siberia as a political suspect when Olga was only three years old. He left his family in the most straitened circumstances with a small capital that brought them scarcely six hundred marks a year interest. The mother was not able to earn anything, for physically she was too delicate, and beyond that she had learned next to nothing that could be turned to account. Then Helena made up her mind to develop her musical gifts which she had shown at an early age. A Warsaw professor had interested himself in her and given her lessons for nothing. During the last few years the weakness in her lungs had developed so alarmingly that the physicians had prescribed a continued residence in a more southerly climate as absolutely necessary. In order to make possible this change the mother had been obliged to sell all her movable property. They had lived for a year in a small and cheap city of Galicia where Helena's health had, indeed, improved, and now they had been a month in Weimar, which in their simplicity they seemed to regard as lying in the far south, and were living along aimlessly under the most cruel privations, borne up only by the hope that Liszt would help Helena to secure

a position, or that the father would perhaps be pardoned and returned to them.

Up to the present time Helena did not appear to have taken any rational steps to earn anything with her piano playing, and it was very apparent from Olga's account that the mother was mostly to blame for this. This good lady was evidently a frightfully stupid person and possessed of an absolutely ridiculous dread that her poor, ugly, emaciated daughters would fall victims to the importunities of the opposite sex. On this account it was naturally impossible for her to secure helpful friends and influential patrons.

During the little one's narrative there came a knock at the door, and upon Florian's "Come in" the two young Crookes entered the room. They were both red in the face, and carried out with embarrassed haste their father's commission; this was to deliver to Florian a number of tracts and pamphlets, which treated of the pernicious effects of alcohol, the preëminent qualities of vegetarianism, and the glories of spiritualism; most of these were in English.

The two lads seemed to be in a hurry to get away, but Florian held them fast and laughingly begged them to take at least the English part of the writings back with them, as he did not understand that language. But the elder Master Crookes put on a knowing expression and replied, "Oh, you need not read them at all; father is satisfied if you only keep them. He gets them by weight. Oh, we have pounds and pounds of every kind, and it's awful sad because people in Germany won't take that kind of thing even for a gift."

"Well, I can do that favor, at least," laughed Florian, and then he introduced the two young gentlemen to

little Fräulein Mikulska and begged all three to be seated.

He offered them cigars but of course the young gentlemen were not allowed to smoke. Florian got very nervous. He scratched his head, rolled his eyes up comically, and called out, "Lord bless my soul, what a crazy world this is! I have no doubt that one can live without meat, beer, or tobacco, if necessary, but when one is not allowed to touch any of those things in youth, I should think one would get a perfectly infernal appetite for them!"

"Oh, we've already eaten meat!" boasted the younger Crookes. "We've got an aunt; father hates her; but she's very rich and is going to leave us something in her will when she dies and so father sends us to visit her sometimes. He hates her because she gives us meat and wine and everything that we're not allowed to have. But we like meat no end. Dick likes it even more than I do," and he nodded towards his elder brother.

"Oh," said Dick, pointing mischievously at his brother; "and Bob was drunk once, on a Sunday too! And he took a black cat to church under his arm and during the service he let her go. All the people laughed so when she jumped up on the chancel, and the curate got such a fright!"

"Oho!" cried Florian, "that shows that the devil lives in alcohol. And what did your father say to that?"

"Oh, he never found it out," replied Bob with roguish joy. "Auntie gave me a box on the ear and then it was all right." The two young gentlemen now became quite at home and loquacious. The visit to their aunt was

evidently among their most cherished memories and they recounted with childish glee all the larks that they had had there. Florian liked the big, inoffensive lads very well and little Olga laughed out loud several times at their stories. They left soon afterwards, as their time for practicing had arrived. They asked Florian if he would not sometimes play trios with them. He accepted this invitation readily and accompanied them to the door. There Dick caught him by the sleeve and drew him into the corridor, where he whispered in an embarrassed way, "We would so much like to do something for the poor Polish girls, but we haven't any money. Father almost never gives us money. We really don't need any either, for father is always with us and pays for everything. We only have money when we win prizes at boxing or foot-ball or something like that." And Bob added with an important air, "Oh, I won a pound once, because I knocked two of father's teeth out boxing. He was very proud of me. But we don't box any more now because it spoils the hands for playing the violin."

With that they took their leave and ran merrily up the stairs. Florian now sent little Olga away, for he heard from over the way how Helena suddenly stopped her practicing on account of a terrible fit of coughing. He told her to admonish her sister to husband her strength carefully, as it was absolutely necessary that she should go with him to Liszt sometime during the next few days. He believed that he could promise her that the clothing problem would be happily solved to-day or to-morrow at the latest.

On this day he went to Fräulein Badacs earlier than usual as he felt the necessity of giving vent to his feel-

ings. "Do you know, my dearest Ilonka," he began without further preface, as soon as he found himself sitting on the comfortable sofa in her pretty rooms, "Do you know what the greatest curse in this world really is?"

"Oh, go away, Herr Mayr, now you want to scold at us women again. Is not nice of you, when I'm so kind to you!" And she bent down quickly over his shoulder and kissed him.

"Thanks very much," laughed Florian, "but I don't mean the women at all, I mean the parents in general. It's quite impossible to say how many parents ruin their children, mostly spiritually. It makes me so angry I could just . . ." and he brought his fist down upon the table with a thump. "How many fine young people have I known who never will amount to anything and never can, because they've got foolish parents. But of course the world has always been tyrannized over by a lot of stupid proverbs, like, for instance, 'Old age under all circumstances must be respected,' and, 'The egg mustn't try to be wiser than the hen.' Lord bless me, I won't say anything about the egg, but one thing is sure, and that is that the young cock is wiser than the old hen every time! And I'd like to know why an old fool should be worthy of respect and a young fool be only just a fool! If anyone is born a blockhead, he's going to be a bigger one as the years go by. Now, why is it that old people stick to their opinions so obstinately? Why, just because they can't make their influence felt by what they are still able to accomplish or by their personal qualities, and so they just bully those who are dependent on 'em and can't defend themselves! Bless my soul, the beasts of

the field are cleverer! As soon as the young ones can eat and run and take care of themselves, the parents let 'em go and don't bother themselves about 'em any longer; and that's right, that's the rational, sacred order of nature — confound it all!" And he banged his fist down on the table again with a violence that made the tea-things jingle.

He looked so funny in his righteous indignation that Ilonka was seized with a fit of hysterical laughter. She tried to speak but she could not get out a word.

"Oh, yes, you may laugh as much as you please!" continued Florian earnestly, as soon as she had recovered somewhat.

"Not one of your two or more fathers ever bothered himself about you, and so far as your Mamma Hoopla is concerned — well, the Lord rest her soul! If a man is going to amount to anything, he's got to do it himself. But when his parents try to force something out of him, they usually begin at the wrong end, and it's a beastly failure. Isn't that so?"

"Why, of course is so!" cried Ilonka still laughing. "Friend Mayr, you are very famous philosopher!"

"A lot of philosophy is needed for that!" bawled Florian. "All you want is two eyes and a little common sense, and you see enough things every day to make you furious for the rest of your life! I say there are two kinds of parents, in the first place those whose children are just as damned idiotic as they are themselves, and then those whose children are much cleverer than they. The first try to teach their children things that absolutely won't go into their thick skulls and so make 'em miserable; the others call it impudent if their chil-

dren's ideas take another direction from their own, and they try with all their might to crush out the inconvenient originality. It's a shame such a bunch can't be prosecuted for infanticide!— There, Fräulein Ilonka, I've had my say,— and I feel better, thank the Lord! And now just pay attention; I'm going to prove my assertions by appropriate examples.”

And he related with the eloquence of indignation the case of the Crookes and the case of the Mikulskas.

He could not have found a more sympathetic listener than his Hungarian friend. She burned with impatience to make the acquaintance of the eccentric Papa Crookes and to play him a jolly good trick. But the story of poor Helena Mikulska really went to her heart, and she at once declared her intention of giving her some of the most necessary things from her own wardrobe, so that the young girl might be suitably fitted out. She would take her the things herself that very evening and was sure that Mother Mikulska would, in the case of a lady, not persist in her foolish refusal to accept anything. With feverish ardor she began to rummage in her wardrobe and boxes to find something that would do for her poor fellow musician. It was not easy, for most of her gowns were much too elegant and costly. At last, after much deliberation between the two, she put aside for Helena a simply made silk dress, not quite new. But that was not enough. The poor girl had to have linen and underwear to go with it. And she literally threw the entire contents of her bureau-drawers upon the floor, examined everything piece by piece and finally selected two pairs each of stockings and drawers, two chemises, one white and one colored underskirt, all in good condition and new.

"There!" she exclaimed gayly, as she rose from the floor, "*ça va bien pour le commencement*,— she can always have one half washed, will last for months. I done that already myself when all was at pawnbroker's! We will change the dress so it fits. Mother cannot be so big goose that she cannot sew? All right now but shoes, but I have too sweet little foot, my shoe won't fit any other girl!"

And she chattered away merrily as she ran pink ribbons through the underclothing, sprayed it with perfumery and finally made a neat package of it, bound with string.

During all this time Florian stood by and watched her. She had never seemed so lovely to him as now, in the midst of this feminine employment, and when the package was ready and she looked up at him with a smile, he clasped her tightly in his arms, pressed her head against his shoulder, and kissed her on the forehead.

"Dear Ilonka! Dear, good Ilonka!" he whispered over and over again. He could not say more, his heart was too full.

Somewhat surprised she freed herself from his clasp and said with a smile of gentle sweetness, such as he had never seen on her face before: "Oh, what you mean, dear friend? What you mean I am so good? Just common egotism of me — hurts my heart so when I must hear of sickness and want among comrades. I feel uncomfortable when I must think: Ilonka has every day good dinner and beautiful clothes, and poor girl with much talent right near has nothing to eat and nothing to wear on her body. I rather give few shirts and few drawers than hurt my heart like that!

Now I can be jolly again with good conscience.— But you are good good boy, dear friend, you are so good I must call you by your first name. You are better than whole lot of them. They are all no good. I only swindle you about them because it was so funny, you believed everything. I won't do that again, honest!"

And she bent over and kissed his hand, and then she laid her cheek against this hand and looked up so kindly and honestly with her great black eyes, like a big good-natured dog.

And Florian could restrain himself no longer. His heart glowed and his eyes filled with tears—he could not tell why—

"O-o-o!" said Ilonka in a tender strangely long drawn-out tone; and then she put her arms about his neck and kissed him. They were the first real love-kisses he had ever received. His senses reeled; his blood hammered in all his pulses, and his arm clasped her so tightly that she at last freed herself from him with a subdued cry of pain.

Twilight had long since closed in, but they did not think of lighting the lamp. Neither did they think of their music that evening. They sat together on the sofa and whispered and caressed. He felt that he loved her, and surely these kisses, these caresses—they could mean only that she too loved him—. . .

And when Florian at last went home the stars were shining in the dark night sky, and the little city already lay in peaceful, Philistine slumber. The gaunt youth stood on the bridge over the Ilm with his silk hat in his hand, his face turned upward to the stars. The old Adam in him had been melted down; he had be-

come a new man,— a new man with wonderful, undreamt-of feelings and a brand-new understanding for the things of this world.

He wandered home by dark and lonely ways — supperless. Profane eyes should not seek to read in his countenance the miracle that had been wrought upon him this day. He laid himself down, and his bed seemed to him a boat which bore him lightly over rolling waves to an island of fairy loveliness, an island which was ever before his eyes with its swaying palm-trees, where birds of brilliant plumage nested, and which sent its intoxicating perfumes far out over the sea,— and which his rocking boat could never reach.

CHAPTER XI

Hlonka, the Good

AND now to think that the next morning it should be raining when Florian Mayr awoke rather later than usual! The stars had smiled so kindly upon his homeward way the night before,—and now this sudden change of weather! He had slept so beautifully, like a child in its cradle,—and now this awakening to grim misgivings and bitter regret! The scornful sky seemed with its dashes of cold water to wish to remind mankind that the springtime of unalloyed bliss was a stupid invention of German poets; and on Florian's bed, as he stared with unbelieving eyes into the dun gray twilight of the morning, sprawled a moral "Kater" of extraordinary dimensions. He sat up, plunged all ten fingers into his thin shock of hair, and hissed under his breath: "Well, I am a low-down brute! That's just what I am.— What have you been doing, you miserable wretch? You've been flirting shamefully with a noble-minded girl.— What ought you to get for trifling that way with her innocent affections? You ought to be whipped in the open market place with a placard hung around your neck: 'This is a swine.' Just wait, you contemptible scoundrel!" And with his right hand he boxed his own ears while he punched himself in the ribs with his left.

By this time he was thoroughly awake. He crawled out of bed and slunk to the looking glass. He re-

garded his reflection with curious interest; anyone could tell from his face what a miserable sinner he was. Hm! So that was the way a false-hearted flirt, a trifler with young affections, looked, was it? Somewhere on his forehead there must be the brand of shame. He looked for it in vain. In fact he was obliged to confess that he was looking uncommonly brisk and fit. Well, at all events others would somehow detect about him the signs of his levity and unworthiness. How could he enter his dear Master's presence now! And above all, she! How could he look her in the eyes to-day? Well, in any case he now would show the courage of a man. He would go to her and humbly ask her hand in marriage. Perhaps it could all be quickly arranged and then she would know him for an honest suitor and no longer think him the mere trifler he had seemed. He thought with terror of the expense, as he stood bending over the wash-basin, and as he pulled on his trousers, a still more terrible thought overwhelmed him: suppose the Master should be angry and send him away wholly discredited so far as his profession was concerned! His career would then be ruined and a malicious world would point the finger of scorn at him.

He even felt a little shy about greeting his good landlady when she brought him his breakfast and on the way to the Hofgärtnerei he held his umbrella down so that no one should recognize him.

With guilty apprehensions he entered the Master's working room. He was ten minutes late and so did not meet with an exactly gracious reception. Liszt was annoyed at some particularly shameless and presumptuous demand that had come in the morning mail;

but the conscience-stricken Florian thought of course that that keen eye had already discovered his folly. He was absent-minded all the morning and when he had to play a duet from manuscript with the Master he made so many blunders that Liszt frowned and warned him to be more careful.

The morning was to end in still greater disaster.

"We are going to-morrow to the Loh concert in Sondershausen," said Liszt when their labors were ended. "Erdmannsdörffer is going to give my 'Mountain' symphony. You may come with us, pchah. Meanwhile you can go and find out which train is the best."

"Oh, pardon me, Master, I know that already; the best train for Sondershausen leaves at 10:25," replied Florian quickly.

Liszt shook his forefinger in the Italian way as a sign of negation and said: "No, that train won't do for me; we can't take that."

"So?" drawled Florian in a tone of surprise and inquiry.

And all at once, before he knew what had happened to him, he received a well-aimed, resounding cuff on his right cheek. As he had himself attended to the left cheek earlier in the morning, his corporeal and spiritual equilibrium was now most perfectly established, and he was conscious, too, to his deep chagrin, that he had deserved far more than a few slaps. But for the moment he was so frightened that he could not even say "ouch!" but only stare at his angry Master in open-mouthed astonishment.

Liszt was stalking up and down the room with long strides and not once did he look at his disciplined pupil

until the latter, almost in tears, was at last able to stammer: "But, Master, what have I done?"

Then Liszt went up behind Florian, still without looking at him, and, patting his shoulder soothingly, said, a little embarrassed: "There, there — pchah — it wasn't meant so bad as all that, my son. I didn't intend to hurt you, but people don't say 'So?' to me. Mind that!" And with a princely wave of the hand he dismissed the poor sinner.

Florian ran rapidly to the station. He had no overcoat, only an umbrella to protect him from the pelting rain. His wet trousers were clinging to his legs when he reached the station just in time to catch the 10.25 train. He rode as far as Erfurt, made the most careful inquiries at the station there concerning the connections with Sondershausen, and established the point beyond all doubt that it really was just as he had said: it was not possible to get from Weimar to the little Court town of Schwarzburg more quickly or more comfortably than by this train. He then strolled about the city until the next train took him back. Wet and half frozen, as he was, he rushed up to the Hofgärtnerei, found the Master at home, and announced, while his face beamed with satisfaction, that the 10.25 was really without an equal.

"So?" said Liszt in a long drawl. And then he suddenly burst into a hearty laugh, for it occurred to him that it was precisely the same syllable with the same intonation that he had just punished so severely. He stroked Florian's cheek affectionately, the cheek which had so recently felt the whole weight of his wrath, and said: "Very good, my son. Well done. I was wrong; forgive me. But in spite of all that, peo-

ple must not say 'So?' to me, pchah! You may come and dine with me to-day, St. Florian," and he parted from him with a cordial pressure of the hand.

Much elated Florian hastened home; while he was changing his wet clothes he even whistled in his joy. The blow from the Master and his own little excursion had done him good and made him forget his moral "katzenjammer." He had not even given a thought to the Mikulska family. The pretty straw hat which he had given little Olga the day before was lying on his table when he returned but he had to think some time before he could make out what it was doing there; then it dawned upon him that that inconceivably foolish mother must have forbidden Olga to accept the gift. It now occurred to him also that he had left that large bundle of clothes at his Ilonka's yesterday. Oh, he really was a very bad man, never thinking of anyone but himself! Would he now have to go and get those things for the poor girl right away? Ilonka certainly could not carry them,—besides she might feel a little delicate about coming to the house where he also lived. He wrestled with the thought of going to her, until the dinner hour arrived, and when he had acquired new strength at Liszt's excellent board and had imbibed a little courage from the good wines, he asked the Master to be permitted to remain away from the "Swarm" that afternoon, as he had neglected his practicing. The fact was he did not trust himself to meet Ilonka again in the presence of so many people after what had occurred. He wished to give himself up to solitary meditation and to collect himself; then in the evening—perhaps—he would go to her and ask her to be his bride.

To the business of collecting himself he began to give serious attention as soon as he had partly slept off the agreeable effects of the dinner. He tried to form a mental picture of married life with Ilonka Badacs, both from the practical and from the ideal point of view. With the best intention to see the light only, he settled down to think; the result, however, was nothing but empty shadow. She was accustomed to spend a great deal of money on her toilette, her good dinners, and her comfortable lodgings. It was altogether out of the question for him to earn enough for both; it would be necessary, therefore, for each to earn his own living as heretofore. Since they were both pianists, they could not very well go on concert tours together. A duet-playing married couple would, it is true, be a novelty but it would soon grow stale, if not downright ridiculous. The probable outcome would be that Frau Mayr-Badacs would be traveling through the south of Russia while Herr Mayr was exploiting the western States of the American Union. Under such circumstances there could be no thought of a real married life. On the other hand she could not be expected to give up her brilliant career as a pianist to become the humble wife of a moderately paid professor at the conservatory of X-ville or a conductor of some amateur musical society in Y-town. With her volatile gypsy blood and her scintillating wit she was perfectly designed for a life in which one day the champagne flows in streams and on the next there is not enough money to pay the cobbler for half-soling shoes. She was able to live on her debts and yet keep in the best of spirits; she knew how to celebrate holidays,— if only there were any holidays to celebrate! But of all the qualities necessary

to make a home comfortable for a husband of the middle bourgeois class she possessed not a single one. And when now, in conclusion, Florian put the question to himself: did he really love this piquant beauty with her amiable temperament, her versatile mind, her talent, and her goodness of heart,—love her, that is, with blind irremediable stupidity; love her exclusively and for what they call eternity,—he was obliged to confess to his own surprise and mortification that he did not.

Helpless and the picture of misery, he was sitting in the corner of his sofa, pulling away feebly at a sixpfennig consolation cigar, when Mr. Crookes and his two sons, armed with violin and cello, entered the room and asked if he would have the kindness to play with them. Florian could not have been more grateful to them had they been angels from heaven; he accepted the proposal with enthusiasm. Let him at any cost not have to think any more for the present. The rigid Crookes was an excellent stick with which to kill time.

The stick took his seat in the corner of the sofa and Florian went eagerly to work with the two youngsters. He played without a murmur whatever they put on the rack,—even Mendelssohn! It was all the same to him; any noise would be a blessing. Whenever they finished a piece, Mr. Crookes, senior, clapped his sinewy hands together three times with great deliberation and, sticking out his under jaw, cried: “O-o, bravo! That is very fine, indeed! Now let us have Beethoven,” or “Would you mind a little Schumann?” He beamed with pride at his sons’ accomplishments, whose playing really was clean, in strict time, and with good tone, though a little dry. Florian, too, came in for some gracious praise for his clever sight-reading.

Trios, sonatas, and concert pieces for violin or cello followed one another in great variety, interrupted only by very brief rests. To play so long and so steadily was of itself a physical feat that commanded respect; but how anyone could sit there for that length of time quietly listening, and that, too, in a small room, without rising from his seat, without smoking, and without having a drop to drink,—that was to Florian a complete mystery. This remarkable Englishman must have been brought up in a rolling-mill or his ears could never have endured such onslaughts. And there seemed to be no limit to the power of his brain to digest music.

For two hours they had been playing all kinds of music, classic, romantic, eclectic, and the shades of evening were already closing in. Lamps and candles were lighted; Mr. Crookes, senior, indignantly refused a glass of beer; Florian drank two. The two Crookes boys were refreshing themselves with water when there came a knock at the door and in response to Florian's wondering "come in"—Ilonka Badacs entered!

Florian was so embarrassed that he turned first as white as chalk and then a deep scarlet. Good Lord above, she had anticipated him and had come to remind him that he had not yet asked her in due form to be his! Surely she did not intend to make a scene before these three long-legged Englishmen? She certainly looked as if she might for she had on a dark silk gown with very little jewelry like a young widow after the first year of mourning and unless he was badly mistaken her eyes looked as if she had been crying!

Florian could not muster the courage to give her his hand; it was all he could do to say: "Good evening" properly. He turned hastily to his guests and intro-

duced "his honored colleague." The Englishmen bowed with their customary national stiffness and did not say a word. Fräulein Badacs on the other hand went straight up to the elder Mr. Crookes, stretched out her hand to him and with a powerful shake drew the lean gentleman's whole length out of the sofa corner.

"Oh, Mr. Crookes," she cried in her rich, deep tones, manifesting the highest gratification while a radiant smile lighted up her pale face: "Oh, Mr. Crookes! I am glad so very, to meet you at last. I have heard of you: that you are universal genius, apostle of all possible schemes to make world better, spirit conjuror, and father of two very famous musical boys. *Isten!* What they are for handsome, dear young gentlemen,—real artist physiognomies,—so sympathetic! But no, is true, *sans phrase*, Mr. Crookes?"

The leathery Mr. Crookes actually blushed under this flood of flattery and Florian thought to himself: "My God, where does the woman get it all?"

Without waiting to see if the universal genius, etc., would find a few fitting words in reply to her extravagant greeting, Ilonka went over to Florian and, taking him by the sleeve, drew him over into the window niche. "My dear Florian, I must say to you something," she whispered in a tone so loud that, had the window been open, she could have been heard over in the cemetery. And, heavens above, she called him Florian without the slightest ceremony!

Mr. Crookes murmured something about not wishing to intrude any longer and the two lads obediently prepared to pack up their instruments. But with one voice both Florian and Ilonka loudly protested that they

certainly must stay and not allow themselves to be disturbed.

"We have absolutely no secrets together," added Florian with a bold front, and quite naïvely Ilonka corroborated this brazen lie.

Father Crookes subsided and the three Anglo-Saxons resumed their seats. Then Ilonka told her anxiously listening friend that she had just come from the Mikulskas. With much difficulty she had succeeded in persuading them to accept the gift; but the misery of which this visit had given her a glimpse had so gripped her heart that her eyes grew moist at the mere mention of it. Helena was sick in bed, very sick; the cough troubled her terribly and it would be some time before there could be any thought of taking her to play to Liszt.

Florian pressed Ilonka's hand gratefully,—gratefully in the name of his protégées, whom in the tumult of his mind he had entirely forgotten, and gratefully, too, in his own name because she had not reminded him of yesterday. Could it be possible that she was not angry with him after all?

There was some general conversation and then at Ilonka's pressing request the musical entertainment of the evening was resumed. The pretty Hungarian seated herself upon the sofa and made Mr. Crookes sit by her side. Thereupon the three performers plunged into a trio by Brahms.

But Dick and Bob began to make blunders and get out of time. Was Brahms too much for them or did the presence of the pretty lady disturb them? Over the piano hung a large mirror and when for a moment Florian looked up from the notes he could see distinctly

how Dick and Bob took turns in glancing over at the sofa. Yes, and before long he had to witness something even worse than that! Mr. Crookes, the world-reformer, athlete, total abstainer, and consumer of music in bulk, began to flirt and Ilonka entered into the spirit of it, alas, how thoroughly! There was an exchange of glances, meaning smiles, an edging up, imperceptible but sure,—awful! outrageous! Finally Ilonka discovered the child's hat upon the table and putting it on, she coquetted before the grinning spirit-tapper and made comical grimaces with amazing effrontery.

Florian could stand it no longer. The two lads had lost their places altogether. With a furious discord he stopped short and, wheeling around on the piano-stool, he cried brusquely: "Well, if we'd rather play masquerade than Brahms I don't care but it's got to be one or the other."

"Oh, go along, dear friend," pouted Ilonka, "why do you want to be so disagreeable? You played so splendidly,—everything ran and sprang about like in ant hill. Was own composition, please? Very interesting.—Indeed, was by Brahms? Very famous man,—but I not like him.—Oh, my dear friends, do you know what? Have a splendid idea! Let's have a lark! Make jolly supper among us bachelors. Each pay a mark for cold meats and Mr. Crookes pay for the drinks. I go buy things. Splendid idea!"

The proposition met with enthusiastic approval, especially from Mr. Crookes who, however, wished to exclude his two boys from the festival. A decisive word from Ilonka sufficed to remove his objections to the great delight of the two beaming young gentlemen. She then asked someone to go with her to help carry her

purchases and, as all four gentlemen were equally zealous in offering their services, she finally let all four accompany her in order that none of them should feel neglected. In front of the door in the softly falling rain there still stood the yellow droschke in which Ilonka had arrived nearly an hour before. She had completely forgotten that she had told the driver to wait. All five of them got into the rattle-box and at the best shops in town they bought cold meats, all kinds of delicacies, as well as several bottles of wine and champagne. As his share of the expenses Florian Mayr paid one mark, the other thirty-two marks including the very expensive droschke Mr. Crookes paid without turning a hair. As a reward for this he was permitted to take a few bottles of seltzer with him for Dick and Bob.

Once home again Ilonka, assisted by the friendly landlady, laid the table and arranged the good things they had bought with so much skill that in spite of the simple service the table presented an attractive appearance. Then all sat down to the dainty feast. It was astonishing to see by how simple a process Mr. Crookes squared himself with his vegetarian conscience: he declared ham to be the very flower of the pig and hence it belonged to the realm of plants; caviar was a vegetable comparable to young peas, and lobster salad, as its name showed, merely a salad. It was only with the sausage that, as a genuine Englishman, he could not make friends. Sausage, he maintained, was and ever must be nothing but stuffed gut and, therefore, no fit food for cultivated Europeans. Bob and Dick giggled incessantly. They had never seen their governor in such high spirits. They gave themselves up to the thorough enjoyment of the meat and, as the seltzer did

not fit in with this at all, Ilonka's art very soon turned the water into wine. Their father had declared that the juice of the grape was a decidedly wholesome and innocent beverage and the devil of the alcohol that had slipped in during fermentation a Christian man must overcome by his own strength of mind. In the case of his boys, however, he said the flesh was still too weak for him to think of exposing them to so unequal an encounter. Fräulein Badacs hypocritically assented to this but slyly shoved her glass of wine over to Dick's place and, taking his seltzer, drank to his father, while the quick-witted young man indulged himself in her wine. But Bob fell on his feet, too. He comprehended the trick and pushed his glass of carbonated water towards his brother who at a favorable opportunity conveyed it to the Fräulein whence it returned by the same route transformed into wine. The effect of the unaccustomed poison was soon evident in the two lads. They began to take part in the conversation with less and less constraint; they became quite confidential with Florian and gave freer and freer expression to their admiration of the fair Hungarian. Finally they volunteered to sing all sorts of English, Irish, and Scotch folk-songs. That was the signal for the beginning of a highly original concert. The two boys sang their songs really very well, accompanied themselves on the piano; and in the interludes imitated the skirl of the bagpipe. Even Mr. Crookes, senior, condescended to vary the entertainment by juggling with the plates and glasses. Apparently he was a little out of practice or was it the result of too copious draughts of champagne? At all events, a notable heap of broken glass and crockery soon covered the field of his artistic ac-

tivity. When the ruins had been removed, Fräulein Badacs was pressed to do something in her turn. She sat down at the piano and played a fiery csardas; the dash of the thing got into the feet of the listeners so that they sprang up as if electrified and it was the funniest thing to see them trying to dance in that little room. All at once Ilonka stopped playing and, leaning against one of the posts of the canopied bed, clasped her hands behind her head and began to sing. She had an untrained voice of some natural beauty but the repressed passion of her Hungarian songs, full of wonderful yearning, she knew how to bring out most thrillingly. And how beautiful she was as she stood there in that attitude of statuesque repose, her large dark eyes looking upward with an expression of melancholy!

Florian Mayr was the only one who throughout the evening had been unable to enter fully into the merry mood of the party. He had observed with increasing displeasure Ilonka's behavior towards the three Englishmen. That she simply wanted to have her fun with the elder Crookes was of course evident but, thought Florian, that was no reason for flirting with him so violently. And why she should want to turn the heads of these good harmless lads, stroking their cheeks and letting them cover her bare arms with kisses up to the elbow, that he could not understand at all. She was now in a way his fiancée, at least his sweetheart,—how could she carry on so unceremoniously in his presence! Florian was jealous. And now, standing there and singing, she stirred his heart mightily with her yearning tones. The blood rushed to his head; he sat down at the table and dug his two fists into his eyes to master his emotion. Father in heaven, he did

love this fascinating coquette after all! He felt an uncontrollable impulse to throw the three Englishmen out and then, as a punishment for the pangs of jealousy she had made him suffer, smother his beautiful beloved in his arms.

Ilonka had finished. She unclasped her hands, stretched herself, and smiled. Mr. Crookes murmured quite softly to himself: "Very fine, indeed!" The two youngsters pressed her hand in silence and Florian remained in his singular attitude at the table without stirring. For a few seconds all was still in the room,—then from the other side of the driveway were heard distinctly the terrible coughing of the consumptive Polish girl and the loud weeping and wailing of her mother and sister.

Ilonka listened for a moment attentively; then, striking her forehead, she said: "Oh, shame on us! It's mean! Here we eat and drink and make merry and quite forget poor little sick girl. Go, Florian, you must be ashamed, too. We'll take little bottle of champagne over to her,—champagne is good for chest and for weakness and, well, fact is, champagne is for everything good." Therewith she seized a half emptied champagne bottle, made a comprehensive survey of the table, and put the remains of the ham and the caviar on a plate. She made a sign to Florian and they left the room together.

When they entered the Mikulskas' room a dreadful sight met their eyes. Helena was leaning back limp in an old wicker chair and her bosom, the arm of the chair, and the floor at her feet were stained with bright red blood. Little Olga stood at her sister's side, trembling and crying; she held a sponge in her hand with which

she had wiped away the blood from chin and lips; the mother, moaning helplessly, crouched in a chair near the fainting girl and wrung her hands and called upon the saints.

Ilonka shuddered at the awful sight and for a few seconds was obliged to close her eyes. Florian quickly took the bottle and plate from her hand until she had recovered from her momentary faintness.

"That's bad!" he whispered to her. "That's a hemorrhage; the poor child will scarcely survive that. I'll go for a doctor. You stay here and see that Helena is at least undressed and put to bed. And cold compresses on her chest, do you hear?" He squeezed her hand encouragingly and rushed away. He ran up to his room to get his hat and umbrella, informed the Crookes that the festivities must end, and dashed off at the top of his speed for the nearest physician.

It was almost midnight when Florian reëntered the lodgings of the Mikulskas with the doctor whom he had been obliged to track to his favorite restaurant. Ilonka meanwhile had made herself useful. The sick girl lay in bed swathed in cold bandages for which the ice from the champagne supper came in most handy. The floor and the wicker chair had been cleaned and mother Mikulska, having attended to this, did the best thing she could do: she held her tongue and let Ilonka have her way. Little Olga, quite tired out, had fallen asleep as soon as she had satisfied her greedy hunger with the remains of the food that had been intended for her sister. In the excitement over the violent coughing fit which had tormented Helena for several hours, the mother had forgotten all about supper. The physician listened at Helena's lungs and sounded her pitifully

emaciated body most carefully. He came to the conclusion that, considering her general weakness, the patient could scarcely be expected to recover. A repetition of the hemorrhage would be certain death. In this advanced stage of consumption little dependence could be put upon the ordinary remedies to prevent the cough irritation. The slightest physical exertion or even mental excitement might render all precautions futile and the stupidity of the mother who might cause this excitement by her moaning and wailing was one of the greatest dangers the daughter had to fear. It was, therefore, agreed that the mother should not be told the whole truth but that it should be thoroughly impressed upon her that she must obey implicitly the directions of the physician and the two volunteer nurses.

When the physician had gone, Florian and Ilonka disputed in noble emulation which of them should undertake the first watch. Florian yielded finally, for Ilonka insisted that she was still very wide awake, and promised to wake him as soon as she felt sleepy. He pressed her hand warmly and looked tenderly into her eyes as he said good night. His heart was so full of what he still had to say to her but this was not exactly the right time to say it, and so with a sigh he postponed it till the morrow and crossed to his little room. He threw himself half dressed upon his bed and was soon fast asleep.

When he awoke the sky was already gray. In the dim light of dawn he recognized his beloved, who stood by his bedside and held him tightly by the arm.

"Dear friend," said Ilonka, smiling feebly, "you do sleep soundly, don't you? Don't be angry because I shook you,—I'm so very tired. Come, be good. Let

me sleep some. It's all 'tended to over there. Poor girl sleeps very soft."

At last Florian comprehended what was required of him. He rubbed his eyes again and then sprang resolutely to his feet. As soon as his place was vacated, Ilonka sat down on the bed, loosened her clothes, unbuttoned all the buttons of her waist with one jerk, and stretched herself out with a sigh of relief. Her corsets she had already taken off in the room over the way. Her eyes closed instantly and she began to breathe heavily.

Florian stood in his shirt-sleeves in the middle of the room, combing his long hair with his fingers and staring at the bed. There was a strangely tender feeling in his heart. After his frivolous behavior of yesterday, there they now were without any foolish shyness, bound together in a good deed of neighborly love, intimate and familiar, like nothing so much as a married couple on the best of terms. Had not this night, strictly speaking, brought them closer together than the fleeting ecstasy of that Arcadian hour? He really loved her now and felt sure the light of returning day would not bring him another moral "katzenjammer," if he should put the momentous question at once. Quickly resolved, he knelt down at her head, gently brushed her disheveled locks from her brow, kissed her, and whispered: "Do you hear me, my treasure?"

She nodded her head and he heard her mutter something impatiently.

"Tell me,—you're not angry with me about yesterday, are you?" he continued in a whisper, undismayed. But with a grunt of annoyance she made a move as if to turn her back on him; he put his arm around her to

hold her fast and went on earnestly: "No, now look here, dearest, you mustn't think I was fooling. See, 't isn't because I like you just a little; I — I love you so,— I'm a perfect fool about you,— honest, 'pon my soul, I love you so,— I'd like nothing better than to have you for my own dear little wife!"

At this she suddenly opened her eyes and looked at him in astonishment. She gave a quick laugh. "*Ti vagy hóbertos!*" she said slowly and distinctly, at the same time tapping him on his chest with her forefinger.

Florian held her hand tight and kissed it. "Ah, come now, say it in German," he whispered with emotion. "Does that mean: 'I love you?'"

In spite of her overwhelming sleepiness, Ilonka had to laugh aloud. "Ho, is splendid!" she giggled, stroking his head. "No, dear friend, does not mean: 'I love you,'— that means: 'You are crazy!'"

Florian sprang to his feet, deeply hurt, and cried: "Oh, don't, you ought to be ashamed, Ilonka! Is that a way,— when I mean it honest and,— ahem, do you think I'm crazy because I want to marry you?"

"Of course, very crazy!" replied Ilonka calmly. "Delights me awfully if you like me. I like you, too, because you are dear good fellow. But when I marry, must be Count,— very rich and very, very, immensely stupid! Ou-ou-ah-ah-ah-oah."

After this monstrously long yawn she closed her eyes and rolled over on the other side.

For some little time Florian stood with his fists doubled up, motionless and frowning darkly. Her deep regular breathing soon assured him that his wayward darling had gone to sleep. "*Herrgottheiliges kreuzdonnerwetter!* Will anyone ever understand

womenfolk!" he exclaimed, gnashing his teeth angrily. Then he put on his coat and stole on tiptoe from the room. It was in no very philanthropic mood that he now went to play the good Samaritan.

All three Mikulskas were asleep. One might have thought that Helena was dead, she lay there so pale and still; only a low rattle in her chest showed that she still breathed and still needed the closest care. As soon as it was day Florian went to his landlady's people to relate to them the events of the night. He had his breakfast brought over to the Mikulskas' so that Ilonka might have her sleep out in peace. The good landlady expressed her willingness to take his place in helping the incompetent Frau Mikulska; Florian was thus enabled with some degree of confidence to go to Liszt at the usual hour.

He told the Master what had happened and Liszt offered to do for the poor sick girl all that money could do. Too soon he was to be taken at his word for Helena Mikulska died less than forty-eight hours later in consequence of a second hemorrhage. Liszt himself accompanied the priest who administered the viaticum, prayed with her family, and held for a long time the bony hands of the dying girl, which for so many years had worn themselves out in order that some day she might exhibit her art to him. But she had already lost consciousness; — the satisfaction of knowing that the Master, whom she had humbly worshipped, had given her the last pressure of the hand could no longer glorify for her the parting from this world, poor little martyr to her art.

A simple funeral was arranged for at Liszt's expense, but simple though it was, in Protestant Weimar

it caused something of a sensation by reason of its Catholic display. The Master himself was present and no small number of his pupils, besides a goodly group of the curious.

Florian as a matter of course had looked after all the details of the funeral, but Fräulein Badacs also remained faithful to the poor invalid to the last. During all the days up to the time of the burial, Florian had scrupulously avoided discussing with Ilonka anything that had no direct reference to their charge. He was still angry with her on account of the unpleasant language with which, between laughing and even yawning, she had repulsed his suit. And yet he was quite unable to tear from his soul his honest love for her, which struck deeper root from hour to hour as he watched the good girl performing her difficult self-imposed duties, so faithfully and skilfully at the sick girl's side.

"After all, she's really a splendid woman," said Florian more than once by day and by night. "The devil knows why I have to be called crazy just because I want her for my wife!" On the evening after the burial he resolved to have a quiet talk with his beloved and not allow himself to be put off by any stupid phrase. He would make her show her colors honestly.

At seven that evening Florian rang at Fräulein Badacs' door. The Fräulein was not at home, explained the landlady in a choice Saxon dialect.

"Then, will you please tell her that I'll call again this evening."

"Well, now, you see, that won't do any good," said the woman with an embarrassed smile. "Fräulein has gone away,—on a journey."

"A journey! Where to?"

"Well, now, you see, I don't know myself. But it isn't likely she's gone very far."

"Who went with her?" Florian himself did not quite know how he came to ask such a question but now that it was out he awaited the answer with fear and trembling.

The landlady smiled shamefacedly, rubbed her bare red arm with her apron, and said: "Well, now, you see, it must be Herr von Oettern,—she's been going with him a long time."

By the next afternoon everyone of the "Swarm" could have told the good Florian that Ilonka Badacs had gone on a little tour of recreation with the irresistible Jean d'Oettern, the same amiable Jean d'Oettern whom the headwaiter of the "Erbprinz" with the infinitely knowing smile had represented to be the fair Hungarian's masseur.

CHAPTER XII

Wagalaweia

DURING the next few days Florian Mayr went about in Weimar like a roaring lion seeking whom he might devour. Outwardly, to be sure, he did not roar, but all the more so within, and like a Bavarian lion too. Hitherto he had found no place in his hardworking life for women, and now his first experience with that species of mankind had to turn out like this! He felt an ungovernable desire to assault somebody, and, as it was unfortunately not strict etiquette to lay hands upon ladies, Herr Jean d'Oettern seemed to him to be the next best candidate. He called twice a day, rain or shine, at the studio, and also at the rooms of the elegant young painter, always armed with a dubious looking walking-stick; but the gentleman was out of town and remained so, and no one knew whither he had gone or when he intended to return.

As Florian was obliged to renounce for the time being the luxury of thrashing somebody, he endeavored at least to make up for it by venting his spleen upon all the members of the "Swarm" whom he disliked. He was no longer so naïve as he had been during the first days of his residence in Weimar, when he readily accepted for good coin everything that his genial companions told him about themselves or others.

His eyes had been opened also concerning Ilonka's celebrated round table of all the virtues, the members

of which were the greatest wind-bags and most impudent hussies of all, and the stories concerning the illustrious descent, fabulous wealth, and mighty genius of the different members had proved to be the purest fiction. So long as he still wandered amongst these sinners as the "guileless fool" he was so indignant at all the irregular relationships which bound together male and female, as well as the running into debt and other outward signs of the abject recklessness of their lives, that he felt like warning his beloved Master from consorting with such black sheep and casting the whole unclean company out of the temple; but since he himself had tasted of the tree of knowledge, he had quietly got rid of the heavy load of stones which he had hitherto carried about in his pockets to cast at his depraved fellow mortals, and, as callow youth is ever wont to generalize upon its wee bit of knowledge and remodel in the twinkling of an eye its principles accordingly, so now the deeply injured Florian threw the responsibility for all the short-comings of this earthly life upon the "devil's brood of woman-kind."

In particular there was a pair of piano-mænads, who had already tried Liszt's patience to the utmost and who regarded each other with a jealousy that was wholly ridiculous. Miss Julia Robertson charged Fräulein Dorette Schönflies with having secured the favor of the great Master by her underhand intriguing, and of having alienated his affections from her, while Fräulein Schönflies reported everywhere that Miss Robertson had conducted herself towards the old gentleman with such bold importunity that he had refused to see her except at his general receptions. The two young ladies spied upon each other at every step

and exchanged the most edifying compliments whenever they met. Miss Robertson threatened to box Fräulein Schönflies' ears publicly, if the latter should ever again dare to remain behind closed doors with the Master, and Fräulein Schönflies in her turn prophesied to Miss Robertson that she would be sent home post-haste before she knew it.

Fräulein Schönflies was in the habit of calling at the Hofgärtnerei, at least every second day at an hour when Liszt received only his intimate friends, and of asking him to see her alone. In this she was successful once in a fortnight at most, for she was an extremely poor pianist and Liszt must have had nothing else to do if he had been willing to grant her private lessons. Her particular affectation was to act like a coquettish young girl, although she would never see twenty-five again. She had her dresses cut as short as possible and wore long blond braids tied with bows. Her childish behavior was in perfect keeping with her manner of dress, and amused Liszt greatly if he happened to be in the right mood. He needed only to pat her cheeks and she at once began her bashful school-girl comedy as promptly as a trained poodle does his tricks at his master's command. When Fräulein Schönflies was not received she found all sorts of excuses for lingering as long as possible in the Hofgärtnerei to gossip with the secretary or with Pauline, the housekeeper, in order to give the impression that she had spent the whole time with Liszt; for her greatest pleasure consisted in rousing the envy of her companions. Miss Robertson on the other hand had higher aims. Even if she could not be a second Countess d'Agoult or a Princess Wittgenstein, she would at least leave her name to posterity

as Liszt's last confidante, as the enlightened cherisher of his last plans and thoughts. She was an energetic person but unfortunately not sympathetic to the Master, and he entertained no idea whatever of taking personal advantage of her enthusiastic devotion. He was not even aware how she dogged his every step and watched with ridiculous jealousy every expression of favor which he showed to other young ladies.

To these two interesting young persons Florian Mayr now determined to turn his affectionate attention. Meeting Fräulein Schönflies one day in the reception-room when Liszt was at work he requested her politely but firmly to have the goodness to take her departure promptly, and not to appear again until the Master sent her word that he wished to see her; and when she began with a whining voice to make objections, he seized her firmly by the wrist and led her out of the room. Once outside she began to weep and wail aloud in order if possible to attract Liszt's attention, and Florian was obliged to escort her downstairs with gentle force.

A burst of derisive laughter greeted them when they arrived in the corridor below. It came from Miss Robertson, who had been as usual lying in wait in order to establish, watch in hand, the length of time her enemy remained with the Master.

Florian at once let Fräulein Schönflies go and turned his attention to Miss Robertson, whom he favored with several compliments that evidently found enthusiastic applause on the part of Fräulein Dorette, for she broke into a malicious giggle. The two ladies then turned their attention to each other.

The result was a most delightful screaming and

shrieking, into the midst of which Florian in vain launched his most select explosives, so that finally there was nothing else to be done but to drag Julia to the garden door and Dorette to the street door and hasten their exits with vigorous shoves. The scene evidently had its witnesses for on the same evening all Weimar was talking about it, and Miss Robertson had bought a revolver at the nearest shop, and openly threatened to shoot Fräulein Schönflies, Herr Mayr and everybody else who should dare to stand in her way.

It goes almost without saying that Florian Mayr, as the latest favorite, was not particularly popular with the other Lisztites. Those who accomplished very little themselves excepting in conceit were the most envious of his privileged position; but as he bore himself towards them in no way arrogantly, and was pleasant enough on the whole, though reserved, towards his colleagues, the slanders of the envious had hitherto not been able to harm him. The incident with the two unfortunate young women was naturally hailed with joy by the whole pack of malicious back-biters, and the misunderstood ones of smaller caliber, who pretended to have been slighted, now rose with one accord and conspired against the over-weening favorite, who in their opinion was to blame that they were only received by the Master in the general "Swarm" and were not allowed the privilege of private lessons. Miss Robertson and Fräulein Schönflies, who had hitherto enjoyed by no means a great measure of popularity, suddenly found themselves in possession of a regiment of devoted friends and eager champions of their innocence. The enmity of the two injured ladies continued to

exist in spite of this, for there was neither a Robertson party nor a Schönlies party but only one, an anti-Mayr party.

The conspirators resolved in the first place to encourage by every means in their power the antipathy to Florian Mayr amongst all Liszt pupils as well as in outside circles of society, and search out eagerly for dark spots in his present and past private life in order to accuse him to the Master with success when the opportunity offered.

But upon the same day on which Florian found two such extremely worthy victims of his wrath, fortune was to smile upon him once more. As he called once again towards evening accompanied by his murderous walking-stick at the studio of Herr von Oettern, he heard at last the words, "Come in!" His heart beat faster. "Ha, the hour of vengeance had struck!" Crossing the threshold with resolute step, he found himself face to face with the celebrated Don Juan d'Oettern.

A devilish handsome fellow he was indeed; even the tongue of envy had to acknowledge that. The slender, sinuous figure, so elegantly and yet so comfortably dressed, the narrow head, golden blond hair and silky mustache, the finely chiseled and yet in no way effeminate face with its wide-awake eyes, the small well cared for hands — it was really no wonder that the unconventional young ladies of the Weimar musical world fell in love with him by scores. But this rational consideration would by no means have restrained the determined Florian from falling upon Jean d'Oettern with his fence-rail, after a short but luminous introduction, had unfortunately a second gentleman not been

present. This gentleman went towards Florian Mayr with outstretched hands before he had time to pay his compliments to Herr von Oettern, and exclaimed gayly, "Well, well, what's this? My dear Herr Mayr! So you have finally landed in Weimar too!" and cleverly imitating Liszt's tone of voice, he added, "pehah! — bravo!" Florian was thrown a little off his equipoise by this unforeseen interruption of his programme. With his silk hat in one hand and his big stick in the other he stared dubiously at the tall man with the auburn beard, and this gentleman was obliged to remind him that they had spent a very merry night together after the performance of Peter Gais's *Satan* before he was conscious that he stood in the presence of Baron von Ried. "Well, I see, you've become good friends already," remarked the baron after the introduction, nodding towards Florian who still stood in an attitude of embarrassment.

"Friends? I beg pardon, that's hardly the case, I'm very sorry to say," replied Herr von Oettern, with a slightly ironical smile, as it seemed to Florian. "I know Herr Mayr by sight and of course *par renommée* — but then you know — Coryphæus of the new season. *Enfant gâté*. Of course! But I haven't yet had the honor of a visit. Won't you lay aside your things, Herr Mayr?"

With that he took Florian's hat and stick out of his hand to carry them to the coat-rack near the iron stove. The gnarled walking-stick attracted his attention. He examined it, held it up to the light, tried a few passes through the air with it and then remarked, addressing both of his callers, "Very extraordinary stick. German grape-vine, isn't it? *Ah, parbleu, c'est une drôle*

de canne! 1830-50! Are you going to introduce that fashion again? Why not? Bravo!"

In this simple manner Florian found himself disarmed. It would certainly not do to take the stick out of Oettern's hands again and say, "No, excuse me, my dear fellow, not in order to introduce the fashion of 1830 but in order to give you a good thrashing,—that's the reason I have brought it along!" Quite true, but what did he want here then, if he had given up all idea of the thrashing? He was not yet advanced enough in *savoir-faire* to have the assurance to make calls upon celebrities without any introduction whatever. But Herr von Oettern seemed to be accustomed to visits of that kind, for he made no inquiries concerning the object of Florian's call.

It was really a happy chance that had led Baron von Ried hither. He started a conversation which at once relieved Florian from his embarrassment. They spoke about musical life in Berlin, and proceeded to a general consideration of the development of the modern German school, and of the relation of this new development to that of the other arts. It was Baron von Ried who sketched the general outlines of the discussion, and threw out the theoretical opinions, while Herr von Oettern interjected all manner of striking observations and illustrative anecdotes. He had been everywhere, he had seen and heard well nigh everything of importance that had taken place in the arts, was personally acquainted with a great number of modern celebrities and was extremely well informed, particularly in regard to French art and literature, having been educated for the most part in Paris where he had become quite at home.

Florian found it a little difficult at first to follow his peculiar, spasmodic, sometimes almost stuttering and at the same time rapid manner of speech. He often left a sentence quite unfinished and suggested the conclusion only by a word or by a gesture, accompanied by an explanatory exclamation. Sometimes he seemed to stop listening entirely and would go to the picture which he happened to be painting and add a few bold strokes or he would run to the piano and play, without sitting down, a few measures of Wagner, Liszt, or Chopin with oddly eccentric rhythm but always bringing out the characteristic figure. The whole literature of modern music lay heaped in great piles upon the piano and upon its costly embroidered silk cover.

The man and his environment fitted together wonderfully. His studio was a small museum of treasures of art and literature from the period of Louis XV. to that of the Empire. Over the false fire-place, upon the shelf of which stood a pair of large Chinese vases with dry bamboo fronds, hung a magnificent Gobelin covering nearly the entire wall. On the other walls hung pictures by Jean d'Oettern himself, as well as older paintings, mostly of the French school, amongst them several of the most celebrated masters. The furniture was Louis XVI. and Empire. Book-cases of dark mahogany with bronze mountings were filled with the most select works of French literature of the eighteenth century, amongst them a large number of costly illustrated works and rarities, particularly in the field of *littérature galante*, all in old de luxe bindings. Upon a revolving table stood a glass case containing all kinds of costly things, such as cut stones, cameos, enameled boxes, painted fans, coins and the like, and upon tables,

etagères and stands and upon velvet mats in shallow glass cases, a lot of other smaller articles of miniature art. The furniture, as well as the numerous comfortable cushions, were upholstered in real old silks, while the other articles of furniture, especially a large writing-desk, were of mahogany with bronze mountings in the Empire style. All the other colors were harmoniously subdued, with nowhere a parvenu striving after effect. These rare things were intended to delight the hearts of connoisseurs and not to catch the eye of indifferent gapers by their evident costliness.

The spirit of comprehensive knowledge which the room breathed was relieved of its dusty heaviness by artistic gayety, or one might also say the spirit of frivolity, ennobled by exquisite taste. During the conversation Florian several times changed his seat in order to examine these beautiful things and Herr von Oettern most obligingly got out every article which he saw Florian looking at and favored him with a description of it. It was said of Herr von Oettern in Weimar that even the most elegant and exclusive ladies were unable to resist him, if they had passed but one half hour in his studio and looked through his books with him, and had studied attentively certain of his miniature paintings on porcelain and ivory. Of course that was the clumsiest kind of calumny, for Jean d'Oettern was much too great an enemy of coarse scandal, as well as of its uncomfortable and dramatic consequences, ever to approach a representative of those circles in which ladies without ties are not conceivable. But although the feelings of an elegant young lady were unfamiliar to no one so much as to our honest Florian Mayr, nevertheless he, too, felt in his own heart the ir-

resistibleness of the young painter. He experienced quite the same uneasiness as any simple mortal feels who dines for the first time at the table of a sovereign, but with the difference that in this case the uneasiness was mixed with a fair portion of æsthetic enjoyment of the delicacies that were on this gentleman's table.

Curiously enough, he felt no such uneasiness with Baron von Ried, who, he thought, would make a jolly companion on a walking tour. He, too, possessed the most aristocratic manners, and he yielded nothing in education, and perhaps not in taste, to Herr von Oettern. But even on short acquaintance one felt his shirt-sleeve temperament, that is, he was uncomfortable in any kind of society disguise, even though he knew how to wear it with grace, and his impetuous vitality loved best to walk abroad, naked in the sunshine. It was characteristic of him that while in conversation he avoided all the brutalities of the "mighty geniuses," his nature was nevertheless tempered with a refreshing lack of prejudice and prudery that stamped him at once as a productive man of the time.

He could not be put into any party programme, he felt no respect whatever for the venerable dryasdust wisdom of tradition nor for the catch-phrases of the day. He knew much and took a lively interest in everything that set the minds of men a-working in these days of intellectual ferment. His opinions came out bold and sharp, but at the same time he listened to the exceptions of others and was very willing to be convinced by good arguments. They are rare — men who are open to conviction! They are set down as weak characters. That's why they are so unwilling to be convinced!

"Do you know," said the baron in the course of the conversation, "I really hate music, because it absorbs every artistic instinct of the million at the expense of serious arts. Nowadays the educated classes use up so much nerve-power and brain-oil in their feverish struggle for life, that they refuse to subject their brains to any effort in the appreciation of art, if indeed they feel any desire for it at all. That is the reason why so few people take any interest in literature. All of us who live in the present and no longer play with old dolls — we all are trying so sincerely to grapple with the great questions of the day, to delineate modern man, this bundle of nerves wrapped in epidermis — a terrible example,— to reform our customs, and I don't know what. We are fanatic Lenten-preachers, devil-painters and candle-lighters,— but the dear good people will not come to our churches, will hear nothing of our devilties, and shade their eyes from our candles with both hands. Anything but seeing, anything but thinking! But words mean that one has to think,— therefore away with the art of words! So now they all lie on their bellies before music. How blissfully it rocks their thoughts to sleep: *Wagalaweia!* How it warms into life the dormant emotions of the most sluggish of vertebrates: *Hojotoho!* How softly and gently it croons,— if necessary one can think of something when one listens, but it's not actually necessary — *weiala-walala-weia!* The sigh and the tingle, those are the fundamental elements of music. Its actual clearness hardly goes beyond that. It is therefore a lyric art consisting only of exclamation-points and dashes. To be sure our latest school of composition understands description also, but after all it is the same simple ele-

mentary actions that it is able to interpret intelligently: storm and thunder, the murmur of forest and sea, and a few other general manifestations of nature. But the rest of it is all — *Wagalaweia*, elemental ooze of feeling! We ought really to inscribe *Wagalaweia* over the doors of all our conservatories of music. And *Wagalaweia* is perhaps the most graphic German equivalent for the foreign word, music. Only the articulate word can give to the primal ooze of tones the skeleton through which tones acquire shape; and when the bones are not so very hard, as with Master Wagner, they are softened and crumbled and eaten away by the insidious slime of the tones. Music is a jelly-fish, driven about by the waves and glistening in gorgeous iridescence, a joy to the senses; but at the bottom only a formless incomprehensibility, a shapeless digestive apparatus, that insatiably drags every living thing into its slimy embrace and sucks the nourishing marrow of its being out of it. Music — water-pest — *Wagalaweia!*”

Herr von Oettern sat down on his piano-stool, slapped his thigh and shook with laughter at the exuberant throng of original metaphors which the baron unloaded in his righteous enthusiasm.

“Water-pest — bravo! Jellyfish — charming! *Wagalaweia* — primal ooze — immense! My dear friend, may I offer you a drink on that? Three Star brandy, or chartreuse — green — stimulates digestion!”

He got out a silver salver with high edges, upon which stood several cut glass decanters which had round their necks little silver shields bearing the names of the best known cordials.

The baron was by no means put out by this raillery and laughingly helped himself. Florian, too, could not

resist a glass of brandy, but he could not bear to have the baron's fascinating discourse choked off with a jest.

"I don't quite understand," he observed, continuing the discussion, "how you, Baron, of all persons, can make such an attack on music, for I've heard say that you were a composer yourself, and without any doubt you are a great music-lover, and more than that, one who knows something about it, too."

"Yes, assuredly I am," replied the baron. "Music is one of the necessities of my existence just the same as — well, let us say, for example, love. You see, people like us three here stand in quite a different relation to music from that of the great mass of the people who crowd the concert-halls and have their daughters instructed in the pianoforte. It affords us the only possible gratification of our great longing for absolute beauty. All the other arts, which are compelled to copy nature and to portray the irreconcilable contrasts, the deformities and brutalities of reality, can never attain to pure beauty. Nor can they ever so emancipate the world of sensation from its material conditions, that an encumbering bit of earth will not remain. We poor poets and scholars of to-day, who have to wrestle so desperately with reality, who struggle along under the burden of knowledge of thousands of years and yet strive persistently to increase that knowledge,— we cry out with especial vehemence for emancipation from reality, and find it to be an unspeakable relief, if we may entirely free ourselves from the ban of knowledge and bathe in the pure fountain of sensation. That is what music affords us,— I mean of course the music that begins with the later Beethoven. This music strengthens us, as well as the genuine musician, who has

got to be a chap over lifesize nowadays, if he wants to make a name for himself. But now just consider for a moment our music-makers and our musical public. Where amongst them will you find anything of that emancipating, strength-stimulating influence, that music exerts upon us thinking beings? Liszt and Wagner have bred the splendid species of universally educated German orchestral conductors. Take a man like Bülow, for example. He is a new, unheard of, absolutely original product, of which our *fin-de-siècle* culture may well be proud. But the general run of music-folk — brrr! I don't believe that the average talents of any other art can show anywhere near so much stupid conceit, general imbecility, shallow-pated bigotry, and odious defects of character like envy and spite,— as music can. The insignificant, mediocre painter or sculptor is nearly always a pleasant, amusing chap. The unrecognized author, to be sure, is a perfectly frightful bore, malicious, bitter, and more given to going to the devil than the rest, but at least he has many-sided interests; one can manage to talk with the brute, in fact get something profitable out of him sometimes. On the other hand intercourse with a musician of the inferior class is apt to be impossible for a man of culture."

"By the Lord, you're right there," exclaimed Florian, clenching his fist wrathfully.

But the baron would not be interrupted; he had got fairly going. His face glowed and his eyes flashed behind his gold spectacles.

"And what do you suppose drives our upper ten thousand to the concert-halls?" he continued earnestly. "What makes them swallow ancient art and modern art,

good and bad, paltry virtuoso-trivialities as well as the revelations of the great masters, with equal satisfaction? I say it is the facility of the enjoyment; one doesn't have to think — that's what makes them like music and so much! It is taken as a nerve-stimulant, like tea, coffee, and tobacco. And then it is so easy to prattle wisely about it. Ideas about music are difficult to bring to book; that's why the superficial mind can so easily make believe when it prates of music. And then again, the personality of the executing artist plays such an important part in music. That's what makes women in particular wild about it. They nearly always forget the work for the individual soloist or conductor who interprets it. And, as in matters of art, men are wont to feel and judge more womanly than women, with us in Germany especially, we find vanity at the highest premium in the musical world. And one thing more, if you please: the expression of interest in music can never compromise us. One may even be a Wagner enthusiast and still have a cousin in the Guards and an uncle in the Cabinet! It is not to be denied that the colossal social contrasts of our time have produced, in our ruling classes, a fear of the unshackling of new forces that has led to the tacit formation on the part of these ruling classes of a ring for defense against free thought — for we know well enough that he who once takes up with that is apt to suffer disagreeable consequences! But a vigorous modern literature cannot elude these consequences, nor honest science either, and even the plastic arts are easily infected with the spirit of revolution. And of course pious subjects of His Majesty and prudent aspirants refuse to have anything to do with such art and such science, and for that rea-

son they turn for their intellectual recreation to music, which cannot be political if it tries. Our whole weak-nerved, emasculated, thought-lazy, pusillanimous society satisfies its mite of artistic craving with music. And then again there are the strong ones to whom music is really a necessity and a delight — a vast public indeed! The strong enjoy music with discrimination and extract from it increase of strength; but the weak, the great mass of concert-goers, devour it indiscriminately, just as the subscribers to a circulating library do their literary fodder, and I maintain that, so far as these are concerned, music dilutes their sluggish blood, yes, and thickens the few brains they have besides. This music cult is simply a disease of modern civilization, like the anæmia of our young women and the nervous prostration of our mental workers. I propose that we dub this disease, ‘*Wagalaweia!*’”

Florian sprang from his seat and shook the baron by the hand.

“You speak right from my very soul!” he cried out with enthusiasm. “Just think, at first I had intended to be a physician — and now I’m going to live on the disease of my fellow mortals after all. It must lie in my blood — I say, Baron, why don’t you have that printed?”

“Done so already, but it’s no use; you can’t cure symptoms. Do pardon me, boys, for spouting such a leading article at you; only in my opinion people of like sentiments ought to make themselves clear to one another. But now let’s talk about something else! — I say, Herr Mayr, do you know that the whole Berlin pack that we met at Raphael Silberstein’s is coming to Weimar for the *Saint Elizabeth*? Gais and his

hangers-on, Tomatschek with his daughter and — well, two or three more wonderful people! ”

“ Haven’t you — improved Fräulein Tomatschek yet? ” inquired Florian with a laugh.

“ Alas no, not yet! ” replied the baron. “ I should have to intrust her to my friend, Oettern. By the way, that reminds me,— how is that splendid girl, Ilonka Badacs, getting on? Do you remember how we laughed that evening? ”

The baron said this in the most natural manner and failed to notice the sign his friend, Oettern, made him with his eyebrows. Florian’s face, however, suddenly turned scarlet and his hands icy cold.

“ Hm! ” he faltered, “ on that subject, Baron, you will have to consult your friend! ”

Herr von Ried gave a long whistle, “ Aha! — *une de plus!* ” and he shook his finger banteringly at Jean d’Oettern. D’Oettern quietly lighted a fresh cigarette and played a few chords on the piano with his right hand. Then he glanced over his shoulder at Florian with a good-humored smile and said, “ A slander — a miserable slander! You know Fräulein Badacs. Well, we are old friends — you are new friends — that’s the whole difference! So — of course — discretion for granted —! But she’s charming — what can one expect? Quite right! And she adores you — she praises you to the skies. Your kind heart and all that — I quite understand! ”

The disconnected words and phrases smote Florian’s ear without his being able to grasp their meaning. He was only conscious of being red in the face and that he would make himself very ridiculous if he should begin to be quarrelsome now. He therefore pretended to have

no more time to spare and took a somewhat precipitate leave.

Herr von Oettern handed him his hat as well as his "German grape-vine" and with consummate politeness invited him to repeat his call at an early date. Florian made an agreement with the baron to meet in the "Genelli-Room" of the "Adler" inn where a number of artists and littérateurs were accustomed to foregather every evening, and then with a couple of awkward bows, he made his exit from the studio, which he had entered as the ferocious avenger of his honor.

He had passed a stimulating hour in which he had renewed one agreeable acquaintance and made another not less valuable. And in spite of this he was dissatisfied with himself and precisely in the mood to make up for the one victim that had escaped him by looking up a number of others for his cudgel. As he came to the door of his house, he even deliberated for a moment whether he should not, for some reason or other, give Mr. Crookes a good thrashing. The Englishman had angered him not a little by his refusal to do anything for the Mikulskas, on the flimsy ground that the banquet, which had been so tragically interrupted, had cost him enough already. They had not even left him the rest of the champagne, and, more than that, his boys had been unruly ever since that evening. A disposition of that kind seemed to Florian to merit a good sound thrashing without any doubt; but, after all, it would come in this case altogether too *post festum*, as poor Helena had now been buried for over a week. And besides Dick and Bob had attached themselves to him so closely during the last few days, and he could

not very well repay their affection by thrashing their father.

Suddenly he thumped himself on the head and with a loud voice called himself an ass. In his blind fury he had been entertaining the wildest ideas instead of simply proceeding to the chastisement of the chief sinner, Ilonka Badacs!

Fräulein Badacs was not at home. However, as the landlady knew Herr Mayr well, she did not hesitate to allow him to wait in Ilonka's room. But before he had been there five minutes he became so impatient that he could not stand it any longer. Besides he was possessed by a vague fear that the naughty Ilonka might easily be as successful as her aristocratic friend in disarming his wrath by pure affability. She could be so very nice sometimes, and if she should take it into her head to cry — Oh, heavens, then it would be all up with his indignation! So he pulled out of the disorderly accumulation of small articles lying about a sheet of paper and an envelope, and set forth his opinions thereon in writing. His pen fairly flew, for he had his opinions well in hand and he had no intention whatever of disguising them. He therefore wrote the young lady exactly what he thought of her, and that he would under no circumstances continue to give her lessons, or consort with her on any other footing than that of the most formal politeness. This he expressed in language that was most certainly neither parliamentary nor fit to print, and that one might best describe by the word "cudgel-prose." Without even reading the letter over he thrust it into the envelope, wrote the address, and then went his way in content.

He spent a very animated evening in the famous

"Genelli-Room" of the old "Adler" inn, where, besides Baron von Ried, he met a small circle of more or less interesting men, among whom the celebrated old actor, Otto Lehfeld, was undoubtedly the most remarkable. The old gentleman related anecdotes of theatrical life, racy, it is true, but nevertheless pungently humorous, and he told them so extremely well that the company did not stop laughing for hours. That night Florian slept soundly and was awakened next morning by his own laughter, one of Lehfeld's delicious anecdotes occurring to him in that state of semi-consciousness that is wont to precede the moment of awakening.

He presented himself to the Master at the usual hour in the best of spirits. But Liszt did not receive him as cordially as usual. He was monosyllabic and his noble brow was clouded. A manuscript score lay before him but he was not looking at it, but gazing meditatively over it into space. Then he suddenly slammed the score to, shoved it aside and took a letter from the writing-desk, which he handed to Florian opened.

"There — pchah! What does that mean, my son?" he inquired reproachfully. With astonishment Florian recognized his own letter that he had written only the evening before to his faithless innamorata. He laid it down on the table again slowly and stammered in confusion, "I only wanted . . . I was so furious — I simply cannot stand this immoral wallowing!"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Liszt, knitting his brows. "Does one write to a lady like that? For shame!" And he tore the letter into small pieces and threw them angrily into the waste-paper basket.

"Oh, Master, you don't know —" began Florian, but he did not finish the sentence. The bitter pain that

his own fall and the destruction of all his youthful illusions had given him, once more became hot anguish in his soul. His eyes filled with tears. He sank into the nearest chair, turned his face in shame from his beloved Master, and bit his lips, in order not to sob aloud.

Then Liszt went up to him, stroked his hair soothingly and said, "Oh, come now, *du courage, mon enfant!* Come, tell me all about it, my dear boy!"

Florian turned quickly and kissed the old man's kindly hand. And then he confessed. He told how morally pure and even austere he was when he had come to Weimar, and how the dissolute behavior of the "Swarm" had filled him with righteous indignation. And then he admitted with flaming cheeks how he had stupidly swallowed all the lies the merry crew had dished up for him; how he had fallen more and more in love with his piquant pupil, until at last, in delicious intoxication, he had become, through knowledge, like the rest; how his conscience had smote him; and how he determined honestly to expiate his fault and make himself happy at the same time,—and then at last the bitter disappointment! He was brought up to hard knocks and knew no other way to resent the insult to his ideals than to use violence, or at least, abusive language.

When Florian had finished his confession, Liszt gazed for a long while out of the window and mused. Then he turned round again with a smile, and, laying his hand on Florian's shoulder, said:

"I believe you are the first pupil of this sort that I ever had. The "guileless fool"—Parsifal—bravo! But my son, when one thinks and feels like that, it

makes life too unhappy, and that is not necessary. Furthermore, you are unjust to the others when you condemn them so absolutely, merely because they understand love in their own way. Believe me, that is the standpoint only of narrow-minded priests and soured old maids, when one judges the morality of people solely according to their conduct in sexual matters. I have a long life behind me and I have enjoyed woman's kindness as perhaps few other men,— and I look back now upon the adventures of my youth with a calm and grateful heart. Ah, *mon dieu*, there was many a furious storm, many a frenzied passion let loose, and I tossed about amongst it all like a rudderless ship upon the ocean. It was grotesque sometimes — haha! — sometimes tragic too. But for all the women who have honored me with their love I preserve the deepest gratitude. Without ecstasy no artist can exist; intoxication of the senses fructifies the imagination, and it is absolutely certain that no man who is not more or less sensual can be an artist. Nor is it just to say that only the genius shall have the right to yield to his impulses in what manner he likes. It is possible for a man to produce works of little importance, and yet be possessed of a genuinely artistic temperament. Neither religion nor social morality has the right to dictate laws as to how male and female shall behave one to the other. There Nature reigns supreme, and the rights of what we call propriety extend only so far as to see to it that the mysteries of love be not shamelessly desecrated. An old man who has been through and fathomed many things tells you that the conduct of men in matters of love is of no value whatsoever in judging of their moral worth. I have known so many

eminent men of trustworthy character and noble sentiments, refined, generous, good, everything one could wish, and nevertheless *in puncto puncti* — pchah — wanton butterflies! And I have also known hard-hearted, base-minded, ignoble men, who in that respect led immaculate lives. Lack of temperament is always coupled with disagreeableness — particularly in women. Ah yes, the poor women! They are so cruelly persecuted. Men want only the one thing of them, but when a woman dares to dispose of her favors as she pleases, and to follow the dictates of her temperament like a free man, she is stoned by men and women alike. That is why it is easy for women of too ardent blood to fall so low and become depraved. The injustice of the world fairly drives them into a life of shame. — Think a moment, my son: how can you ask of this poor Ilonka that she shall love you alone and belong to you alone? She is just as free a being as you are and an artist full of temperament. Has she not the same rights as you have? You treat her like a criminal for whom no expression of scorn can be too strong, and at the same time you yourself know best of all how good she is. She is as innocent and honest as a child and has the softest heart and the truest, noblest character of all my young women pupils. You have wounded her cruelly. Go and ask her forgiveness! She was here late last night and cried pitifully over your foolish letter. Make amends, my son! We artists must not be priests; but we may be Christians — and to despise human weakness is un-Christian!”

The aged Master stood there, his form erect and radiant in the morning sunlight, in which his snow white hair shone about his head like a halo, and his

kindly eyes looked down with fatherly affection upon the young man, who sat prone in his chair before him.

Overwhelmed, Florian bent over his wise Master's hand and then went out without a word, that he might commune with himself by lonely ways.

*

CHAPTER XIII

A Wiedersehen

ABOUT the middle of June after long and careful preparations, Liszt's *Legend of St. Elizabeth*, with full stage setting, was to be given at the Court Theater of Weimar. Many men were gathered together in Weimar for this event, bearers of names wellknown in the world of music. On the day of the performance Baron von Ried and Florian Mayr went at noon to the railway station to welcome their Berlin acquaintances.

The train puffed into the station and there at one of the car windows they caught sight of Raphael Silberstein's enormous nose. The train had barely come to a standstill when that archangel of the divine Gais opened the door and sprang out, all eagerness and zeal to assist the great Peter and his retinue in dismounting. This retinue consisted of Herr Tomatschek and his daughter and another lady whose resolute expression was more striking than her beauty. The baron did not hesitate even amid the throng and tumult of the station to greet the great composer by loudly trumpeting a motif from one of his operas, for which he received in acknowledgment a gracious bend of the head. Peter Gais's neck had grown still thicker in the course of the last months and it was probably this that caused him to carry his head higher than ever. The energetic looking lady with the close cropped curly hair he coolly introduced as his pupil and devoted friend. Herr Tomat-

schek was as handsome as ever. He wore a black velvet jacket and a white silk shirt with a silk cravat. And his daughter, Libussa, with all her lovely dark beauty looked even by bright daylight pale, weary, and wornout. They approached the exit, Peter Gais with his "devoted friend" in the lead, behind them, Raphael Silberstein, laden with two valises and various smaller pieces of luggage, then the baron with Libussa Tomatschek on his arm, and finally Florian with the father of this singular maiden.

On the terrace in front of the station the little troop halted in order to come to some conclusion about a hotel. At that moment Florian suddenly caught the sound of a wellknown voice. He turned quickly and found himself face to face with — Thekla Burmester! She gave a little startled cry: "Oh, Herr Mayr!" and then seized her father who was walking at her side by the arm to attract his attention. But Herr Burmester pretended not to see Florian and felt busily in his purse for some small change to give the porter. His wife, however, who was a few steps in the rear, had recognized Florian at once. She cast an angry look at him in passing and, taking her daughter by the arm, led her quickly down the stone steps. But Thekla was not to be prevented from looking back over her shoulder and Florian quickly raised his hat with a nod and a kindly smile. At the same moment a figure hurried past him which he thought he recognized also: soft hat, thick dark hair, and a mustache with a melancholy droop, — surely that was — ? The gentleman entered the omnibus of the "Russischer Hof" with the Burmesters. Of course it was Antonine Przewalski, the "sensitive artist!" So he was traveling with the

Burmesters, stopping at the same hotel, probably at the consul's expense,—perhaps he was even more closely connected with the family. Florian stamped his foot and looked angrily after the omnibus as it rattled away.

The voice of Herr Tomatschek brought him to himself again: "Perhaps you are acquainted with the people with whom our friend Przewalski is traveling?" he asked curiously. "I saw them all get on together in Berlin."

"Aha! Then you know this damned Prositlaus, too?" replied Florian. "I used to give Fräulein Burmester piano lessons,—that was the Consul Burmester of the Markgrafenstrasse. Has the scamp had the effrontery —?"

"Why, certainly, he is said to be engaged to her," interrupted Tomatschek quickly. "There's money behind it all, I suppose? I have heard something about a million marks,—some say a million thalers!"

"You, my dear Herr Tomatschek," cried Florian suddenly with droll solemnity, seizing the handsome Toby firmly by the arm, "You may call me a black-guard if I allow this noble Pole to get out of Weimar without a thrashing. I still have something charged up against him in my accounts. I take you for my witness."

"Ah, with pleasure," replied Tomatschek joyfully. "If you issue tickets of admission please put me down for one. No one can abide the fellow, this Przewalski. He's an earwig, bedbug that makes his nest everywhere, that is, of course only where there is something to be had,—he can't be exterminated. Besides he has no ability. Why this winter he gave a concert of his own compositions at the Singakademie,—the consul of

course paid for it all,— I tell you that was the greatest rot I ever heard in all my life! Even the dead-heads got up and fled after the first half-hour; you can guess from that how many people stayed to the bitter end. That pretty Fräulein there presented him with an enormous laurel wreath with ribbons in the Polish colors, white and red.”

“What, Thekla?” cried Florian in a rage. “Well, my God, are all womenfolk possessed of the devil?”

Peter Gais and his party had at last settled upon the “Adler” inn and they crawled into its omnibus, but Baron von Ried and Florian preferred to return to the town on foot. The baron’s humor was as cheerful as Florian’s was sour.

“Heaven is my witness,” exclaimed the former with animation, “this Libussa Tomatschek delights me mightily. Why, what a charming little head she has and what wonderfully silky hair!”

“Oh, stuff! leave me out of it!” growled Florian. “I can’t understand how anyone can get excited about these fool girls. I’m done with the baggage.”

“*Herrgottsacra!* but I do get excited,” cried the baron laughing, “and when I no longer take any pleasure in the dear girls, I think I might as well get off the earth altogether.” The baron easily became infected with any dialect and in this speech Florian’s Bavarian accents had caused him to fall into the choicest stage of Tyrolese.

Florian looked at him askance with an expression of ironical pity. “It seems to me,” he said, “a man ought to be glad to get out of all this social business and have some peace at last. I suppose, after all, the most sensible thing to do is to get married; then all you’ve

got to worry about is just your one goose at home and not the whole flock of geese running round outside."

The baron stood still and laughed aloud. "Oh, holy innocence!" he exclaimed. "Now, pray, give me your attention; I'll proclaim to you an incontrovertible truth: you need to be married at most a year in order to become solemnly convinced that all geese without a single exception are preferable to your own,—or rather that you, unhappy man, have happened to catch the normal, original, primeval goose, in comparison with which all unmarried females of your acquaintance shine as angels."

Florian glanced at the baron distrustfully. "Then have you had such pleasant experiences to go through?" he asked.

"If you please, let us not become personal," answered Herr von Ried, growing suddenly serious. "But mark one thing: a genuine artist ought never to marry, or at all events,—no, the exceptions baffle all description."

"Well, according to all that, you don't seem to have a very high opinion of women either."

"I? Oh! I have always tried my best to be just. Let me tell you something, my dear Herr Mayr: women are esteemed most highly by men who have been fortunate in love and who have at the same time preserved their nobility of nature; in a lesser degree they are valued by men who are perfectly contented with their married life, and least of all by the wealthy voluptuaries. The man who regards love as a business transaction will always despise women, just as young men do who have never been regarded by any decent woman as grown-up, and just as certain underbred men do, whose hope-

less and complete vulgarity must forever exclude them from the society of women of refinement."

At the next street corner the baron took leave of Florian with the understanding that they were to meet their friends after the performance in the evening. Florian went on alone to the restaurant where he was accustomed to take his tedious midday meal. He was in a wretched frame of mind. He had listened to so many wise sayings about women from his Master and from this distinguished author whose professional knowledge of the human soul gave his words authority, — and yet all the philosophy he had imbibed did not serve to restore his equanimity. He regretted his brutality towards Fräulein Badacs and had, in fact, since she had refused to see him, begged her pardon in writing. He had received no answer from her but she had returned his salutation pleasantly when he bowed to her in the street. At their meeting, however, in Liszt's salon she had given him clearly to understand that she would permit no further discussion of the matter. That had angered him, too, for he still felt that he was the one that had been injured first. To him she had been of all women the first, but to her he was of no significance whatsoever, a perfect zero! That was more than his pride could swallow; it cut him deeply.

And now all at once the other one had turned up again, the good, sadly persecuted child, who had attached herself to him with so much trustfulness, even though he had abused her! The look she had given him when she turned round in front of the station had said distinctly: "Come, help me, don't you see how unhappy I am!" And all this time that he had been in Weimar, he had not given her one thought. He had,

like the great simple greenhorn that he was, stumbled into an adventure with a person to whom his homely German sentiment was only a matter for mirth, and meanwhile dear little Thekla, who was surely better suited to him, he had left helpless and abandoned to her fate. If she really was engaged to the loathsome Pole, if she really had in public presented that object of disgust with a laurel wreath, then she certainly must have been forced into it and only her despair had availed to overcome her opposition. Ay, ay! that was the way of it: it was he that was to blame for letting this brazenfaced Polack steal the dear girl and sneak off with her good money into the bargain. Was it inexorable fate that the moment an honest man had anything to do with women everything must go wrong with him? What a comfortable life he had led hitherto, and now it seemed to him that he was nothing but a good-for-nothing wretch.

The food did not taste good. The last course he left untouched and for two hours wandered about without purpose or destination. The afternoon passed drearily, especially as the reception at Liszt's was omitted on account of the performance in the evening. In the theater at last he found diversion and excitement.

The little old house was filled to the last chair and in the parquet and first gallery were to be seen many musical celebrities, out of town critics, and distinguished friends of the great Master. The grand-ducal family with the court occupied the large middle box, a circumstance which of itself gave the occasion an air of impressive dignity. The Burmester family sat in the first gallery at the right, places formerly reserved for the nobility,

and, between the all too slender Frau Consul and the plump and pretty Thekla, Antonine Przewalski was posing. In the so-called "visitors' box" sat Jean d'Oettern beside a member of a mediatized princely house and his handsome consort. He used his opera-glass industriously and bowed and smiled to his acquaintances on all sides. Baron von Ried, Toby Tomatschek and daughter, Peter Gais with his "devoted friend," and Florian Mayr sat together in the parquet. In the intendant's small orchestra box appeared just before the beginning of the performance Franz Liszt. A table with two candles had been placed in the box for his use. On the table lay his orchestral score in case he should wish to refer to it during the performance. At the left in the first gallery Florian noticed to his great surprise Ilonka Badacs in the company of the gaunt Mr. Crookes. The boys were not there,—presumably they were not permitted to go to the theater as yet!

Until the overture began, Florian kept his eyes as much as possible on the Burmesters. He could see how the Pole with a great show of tenderness kept trying to draw Thekla into conversation while she kept turning away impatiently and busying herself with her opera-glass. Was it possible that she was looking for her former teacher and faithless friend? Her glass ranged through all the rows of the parquet from back to front. Florian rose and turned his back to the orchestra. There,—now she seemed to have caught sight of him! He saluted her with his eyes and a slight bend of the head, and she put her glass down. He thought he had seen her dark little head inclined just a little towards him. At that moment Przewalski brought his

lips close to her and whispered something. She shrugged her shoulders, obviously annoyed and leaned back in her seat. The handsome Antonine took the glass from her hand and now in his turn directed it towards Florian. But just then the lights were turned down and the overture began.

In less than quarter of an hour Florian had forgotten all his surroundings and was completely under the spell of this wonderful music. He was one of the probably very few hearers who followed with undivided attention and honest admiration the somewhat labyrinthine paths which the mind of the Master had traversed in his *St. Elizabeth*. The work is too far removed from everything operatic, too ecclesiastical in its style, and furthermore too undramatic in construction to produce a powerful effect upon the stage. As a consequence the naïve listeners were thoroughly bored; they awoke from their quiet little catnaps only for the Crusaders' march and the storm scene, and they were heartily glad when it was all over, but the professionals and especially the closer friends of the Master and of his school were all filled with delight over the wealth of musically significant details and the atmosphere of religious consecration which pervaded the whole work. At the close of the performance numerous groups, especially of visiting strangers, remained standing in the vestibule or in the auditorium to see Liszt when he came out. Among these was the Burmester family as well as Peter Gais with his contingent. The poor little Herr Consul had been roundly scolded by his wife before they had got down stairs because he had yawned constantly. Thekla, following at her mother's heels, had heard this and in the vestibule she whispered re-

assuringly: "Never mind, papa,—I thought it was awfully tiresome, too."

At this point Przewalski came up with a young gentleman belonging to the outer circle of the Lisztites whom he introduced as his friend. Frau Burmester at once drew the gentleman into conversation and sought to ascertain all sorts of intimate facts about Liszt's mode of life and his attitude towards his women pupils. All the information that the young gentleman was able to give failed to satisfy her. She regarded the lingering groups through her long-handled lorgnon, asked the names of different individuals, and all at once burst out: "Tell me, how should one go about it to meet Liszt? We should be greatly delighted to attend one of his afternoon receptions,—shouldn't we, Willy?"

"Yes, indeed, tremendously," declared the consul dutifully.

"Well, if you have any connections,—" answered the gentleman.

"Oh, we know the whole musical world of Berlin," cried Frau Burmester almost defiantly. "Besides our future son-in-law left a very influential visiting card at the Master's only this afternoon: the score of his latest symphonic poem."

"Ah!" cried Antonine's friend with a peculiar smile, "that to be sure.— Besides to-morrow evening there is to be a great reception at Liszt's. The court will be there and a number of distinguished artists and other celebrities. And there is likely to be an uncommonly interesting programme of musical treats. Smetana, the Bohemian, will play a new piano quartette, a notable Russian singer is to sing, and then,— Oh, yes, Daniela von Bülow is coming over from Bay-

reuth on purpose, I've heard; you know, of course, Frau Cosima's eldest daughter."

"We *must* go!" cried Frau Burmester excitedly. "At any price. We'll stay over another day, won't we, Willy?"

"We haven't even been presented yet," objected Herr Burmester timidly.

"Oh, nonsense, what's the use of having a son-in-law *in spe*," laughed Frau Olga exuberantly. "You'll arrange that for us, won't you, dear Antonine?"

Antonine ran his fingers through his hair, snorted once or twice, and looked around helplessly. "Khn, khn,— I really don't know —"

"Well, then for heaven's sake make up to some influential person or other," snapped Frau Burmester impatiently. "Who is it that has the most influence with Liszt here?"

Antonine's friend smiled scornfully as he replied: "Well if your son-in-law had the honor of knowing the celebrated Herr Mayr, you might then still cherish hopes."

"Who is Herr Mayr?" inquired Frau Olga, elevating her scrawny shoulders.

"Oh, isn't the celebrated Herr Mayr known in Berlin yet? He throws ladies down stairs and plays the savage Cerberus before the holy of holies. Why he simply hypnotizes the good Master and makes him do whatever he likes, this celebrated Herr Mayr with a-y-r, Florian Mayr."

"Papa, did you hear?" whispered Thekla in excitement, squeezing her father's arm tightly.

The consul nodded and, turning to his future son-in-

law, said with an engaging jeer: "Why, that is most opportune; you know Herr Mayr so well!"

The noble Pole turned pale with rage and snorted his disgusting "khn, khn" so violently through his nose that the hairs of his silky mustache trembled visibly.

Frau Olga made a sour face and reproved her husband's rudeness with a severe glance.

At this moment Liszt entered the vestibule by one of the side doors. At his right walked the court conductor, Lassen, who had conducted the evening's performance, and at his left Florian Mayr. The gentlemen present took off their hats and bowed low before the venerable Master and some of the ladies, too, made a formal court curtsey. Some elderly gentlemen went up and spoke to him.

Florian had descried the Burmesters at once. He looked Thekla straight in the eye and saluted her with great cordiality; whereat she blushed scarlet and dropped a curtsey like a little girl. Instantly her mother gave her a stealthy dig in the ribs.

"What are you thinking of! We don't know that person," she whispered.

Almost at the same moment Antonine's friend, covering his mouth with his hand, said in a low voice: "Madam, that is the celebrated Herr Mayr. Just look, papa Liszt is introducing him to the old gentleman. Good Lord, how affectionately he pats him! It's incomprehensible, the infatuation he has for that man!" Then, turning to Przewalski: "Well, why don't you go and speak to your friend Mayr?"

"Oh, some day I shall kill the man!" hissed Antonine angrily.

Liszt moved towards the door and the whole company followed him. Antonine offered his arm to his fiancée but she repulsed him with a shudder and clung the closer to her father.

"Come, papa, let's get away from here quickly," she whispered excitedly. "I can't stand it any longer."

The Frau Consul caught sight of the rapidly departing pair and, seizing Antonine's arm and drawing him quickly along with her, she burst out angrily: "Now, you see, there she is running away from you again. What does it mean? I believe you don't know how to command her respect; you must make some impression upon the child!"

"Oh, ought I perhaps to strike her like this Herr Mayr?" retorted Antonine offended. "That seems to be the surest way to make an impression upon Fräulein Thekla."

"And what do you do?" rejoined Frau Olga irritated. "You're always telling her of your marvelous successes with all kinds of great ladies and boasting of your princely and other famous acquaintances. If instead of that you'd have success with some of your works or could make your personality tell in any way at all,—as this Herr Mayr does! But you can't even get us an invitation to Liszt's."

"Oh, I beg your pardon, allow me, mamma," contradicted Antonine, greatly piqued. "I will procure you an invitation,—but a trifle for me. Liszt has requested me to go to him to-morrow at nine o'clock to go through my work with me. He would be very glad to make my acquaintance, was the word he sent me. Oh, you will see, mother, whether I make impression or not. Khn, khn!"

"Well, we'll hope for the best," replied Frau Burmester, not yet quite convinced.

"And now, dear mamma," continued Antonine with a tender intonation, "you will help me, won't you? that the wedding day may be named soon. I assure you, Thekla's opposition is nothing but a young girl's shyness. I shall be able to overcome that brilliantly as soon as I am her husband. Please, khn,— I overcame the pride of the Countess Leszczynska and the little countess —"

"Oh, yes, I know,— her real wish was to go into a convent and then she thought she'd rather be carried off by you,— you've already told me that story, dear Antonine. For your sake I honestly regret that our Thekla possesses so little of the temperament of your Polish countesses." There was not the slightest doubt that Frau Olga was speaking ironically.

"Oh, I shall, khn," began Przewalski, proudly throwing out his chest.

But his future mother-in-law impatiently cut him short and, imitating his accent, cried: "Oh, you will! What you will and what you won't do! You're the greatest musician of the future that I have ever encountered. But you've really got to marry Thekla pretty soon for these everlasting tiresome scenes with my husband must stop. Unfortunately he has once for all a prejudice against you. Make the child happy, that's the only thing you've got to do if you want to win the consul over." Thus speaking, they had reached their hotel.

Meanwhile Florian had accompanied his Master home and there had left him to his older friends and admirers in order himself to keep his appointment with

his Berlin acquaintances at the "Sächsischer Hof." But he wanted to let the exalted and devotional impression of the work he had just heard fade away in his soul harmoniously, so, before returning to the company of men, and especially of Berliners, he made his way, not through the town, but around by the back of the Hofgärtnerei and thence through the park.

When he reached the neighborhood of the Rondell, where on fine Sundays in summer the military band used to play, he heard the cooing of lovers and, as he came nearer, he could dimly descry a couple on one of the benches. He stepped from the gravel walk to the grass and listened. He himself thought that it was not exactly nice of him, but he yielded nevertheless to the sudden impulse in order to learn for once how the thing was done among normally constituted lovers. There was something like envy in the impulse; for since he had fared so badly in his first love affair, he carried about in his heart an ardent yearning to be loved.

"My poor little heart, I'm awfully sorry for you," he heard the man say. "Of course it's no wonder that you've got your head full of such strange ideas about the world and about us men in particular. You grew up in a wholly unhealthy and abnormal atmosphere."

Florian thought he recognized the voice. Could this cultured lover be—?

Then the girl began to speak but not in tones of tenderness. She spoke in a loud voice and dug the toe of her shoe viciously into the gravel. "But I don't want to be pitied,—I can't at all make out what it is that you want. I have a father who adores me; I enjoy the friendship of distinguished men; the whole world of my thoughts I have for myself."

"That's just the trouble," interrupted the gentleman eagerly. "If you would only think a little bit less and feel a little bit more naturally, all hearts would go out to you and you could exercise an extraordinary power over men. Believe me, I'm convinced that you have within you the makings of a great artist but you won't give the artist a chance against the cross-grained, spoiled child within you. It would all come so easy to you, especially on the stage; your natural feminine charm furnishes you with three-quarters of your success to start with. So first learn to be a nice dear girl and all other blessings will be showered into your lap."

"I notice, Herr Baron, that for the last ten minutes you have consistently addressed me in the forms of intimacy," replied the girl unmoved. By this time Florian knew exactly whom he had before him: it was Baron von Ried who was doing his utmost for the regeneration of Libussa Tomatschek.

"Good heavens, girl," cried the baron in comical despair, "you're a regular iceberg! You certainly must have noticed that I like you, deuce take it all! Don't interrupt me all the time with your frivolous remarks. I don't want to start a flirtation with you. Why are you so absurdly stubborn? All that I want to do is to bring you to reason and thereby earn my reward in heaven."

"Ah, indeed, and that's the reason you advise me to be unreasonable?"

"Exactly, and very well said! Verily, I say unto you, my gracious Fräulein, except ye become as one of those that are in love, it's all up with the kingdom of heaven,—that is, on earth."

Fräulein Libussa laughed aloud and the baron, fold-

ing her in his arms, cried in uncontrolled delight: "Ay, see that, how wonderfully pretty your laugh is! Come, you shall have a good kiss for that."

"Oh!" said the Fräulein, struggling feebly, but the baron already held her by the head and stifled her protests with his kisses.

Florian felt that at this point propriety demanded a speedy retreat on his part. The night was so mild and the moon shone with such a matchmaking wantonness, like a lonely lantern in a dark alley, and every fifty steps Florian came upon a slowly strolling pair of lovers with their arms tenderly entwined,—it was enough to drive one mad! If only he might now take a stroll with dear little Thekla Burmester, her dark head upon his shoulder, his arm around her waist,—surely he could think of enough tender words to whisper in her ear and he was convinced that he would not be reduced to the necessity of calling her "a regular iceberg," as the baron had his singular companion. He certainly would have felt no uneasiness about the putative bridegroom; Thekla's eyes had plainly betrayed that her feeling for him had remained the same.

In the garden of the "Sächsischer Hof" Florian found a rather discontented company. Peter Gais had just quarreled with his "devoted friend" and was sulkily chewing his cigar. Raphael Silberstein hitched about uneasily on his chair and deliberated in vain how to lead the Titan's thoughts into another channel. Toby Tomatschek had turned his back upon the entire company in order to keep his eyes fixed on the door; from time to time in his excitement he tumbled his curly hair about.

"What have you done with my daughter?" called

out the handsome man as Florian approached the table.

Florian shrugged his shoulders and put on an air of complete astonishment and profound ignorance. He sat down beside the "violin-king" and looked from one to the other in wonder. No one spoke a word.

Suddenly Peter Gais emitted an inimitable, contemptuous "Ho!" and shifted his cigar from the right corner of his mouth to the left. All looked at him expectantly but for the present the Titan had nothing more to say. Florian meanwhile gave his order to the waiter.

Toby Tomatschek heaved a deep sigh and, leaning over to Florian, whispered in his ear: "I have a foreboding of evil."

"Oh, pshaw!" rejoined Florian with unbecoming hilarity.

"The baron has run away with my daughter, what'll you wager?" whispered the handsome Toby in a tone of deep dejection. "He has long loved the girl. You know that he wrote a part expressly for her? Didn't you know that? My daughter is to create the rôle at one of the first theaters of Berlin. The play is called *The Blackguard*."

Florian started. "Good God, that's a strong title!"

"Hm, yes, there's marrow and force in it," assented Tomatschek meditatively. Then he slowly blew forth a mouthful of smoke and began to whisper again: "Would you advise me to telegraph to his wife?"

"How? What's that? Whose wife?"

"Why, the baron's wife of course. I had thought of wording it something like this: 'My daughter just abducted by your husband. Will you move for di-

voice? Otherwise proceedings on my part.' How does that strike you?"

"Oh, 'proceedings' strikes me as splendid," replied Florian, scarcely able to restrain his laughter.

"Hm," murmured the "violin-king," growing thoughtful again, "you understand; honor above everything,—one cannot allow oneself to be trifled with. For the rest I quite understand the baron's motive; in his place I should run away with my daughter myself. Oh, Libussa is wonderful woman! The baron discovered her phenomenal talent at once. It goes without saying that she would have made her way even without this marriage."

"What marriage?" inquired Florian completely puzzled.

"Why of course the baron will marry her when he has obtained his divorce!"

"Oh, I see, I had already forgotten that the baron was going to get a divorce," replied Florian, chuckling to himself.

Peter Gais had just taken a deep draught from his glass which he now replaced upon the table with a vigorous bang, uttering as he did so in a loud clear voice the single word "Rot!"

Raphael Silberstein looked up at him with enthusiasm as if expecting a further revelation and since the "devoted friend" as well as the gentlemen present cast inquiring glances towards him, the Titan was at last moved to explain himself a little more in detail. He made a rather long speech which was by no means coherent but the gist of which seemed to be that it was the highest time that Liszt and Wagner should be superseded.

"They are already superseded," remarked Raphael Silberstein as if that were something quite obvious, at the same time regarding the Titan with a look of tender adoration in his soft eyes. With *Satan* you have left the *Götterdämmerung* far behind."

"My dear Silberstein, you always think you must become personal at once," said the creator of *Satan*, reprimanding his disciple. "A just estimate of my position in the history of music cannot be formed for twenty years to come. For this I am quite prepared."

At this moment the "devoted friend" discovered Baron von Ried and Fräulein Libussa making their way among the tables in search of the party. They rose and beckoned till they attracted the attention of the couple who thereupon joined them. All kinds of teasing remarks were made but neither the baron nor the Fräulein was particularly embarrassed by them. They declared with innocent unconcern that they had taken a little walk together. Libussa looked wonderfully pretty. Her eyes sparkled and she even had some color. She ate her supper with excellent appetite and carried on an animated conversation with both Florian and the baron. Papa Tomatschek scrutinized her narrowly and did not seem to know exactly what to make of her behavior. The baron, too, was in splendid spirits and soon made the conversation flow freely. It was not long before the whole company was in the thick of a fierce battle for Peter Gais's assertions became more and more extravagant and by midnight it had gone so far that every claim to honor, civic or other, had been denied to every illustrious man of the century. It was a wholesale slaughter, such as the kings of Dahomey were wont to make in celebration of their ac-

cession to the throne. The upshot of it all was that Peter Gais sat enthroned alone as the one solitary genius of his time. At first the baron had earnestly opposed these extravagant statements but later he had recourse to irony, whereas Florian lost his temper at once and became insolent. A little more and the dispute would have ended in personal violence. Raphael Silberstein had already declared that only consideration for the ladies had deterred him from challenging Florian and the baron to a saber duel. At this Libussa had playfully hurled a beer-mat at his nose and this affront he swore to avenge on her father. In short it proved to be a thoroughly jolly evening and they parted at a late hour filled with rage.

CHAPTER XIV

The Judgment

IN spite of the long duration of the evening symposium, Florian appeared at his Master's house next morning at the usual time. It is true, he was not feeling quite fit. The outrageous heresies of the great Peter Gais produced worse effects than the small amount of alcohol that he had imbibed. Nor was Liszt, either, in very good spirits. He too had gone to bed very late, and moreover had been thrown a little off his spiritual equilibrium by the performance of his *Legend*. He grumbled a bit as he thought of the evening before.

"A work of that kind has no place on the stage," he growled. "It's not done with my consent. One shouldn't stare at *Saint Elizabeth* through an opera-glass. But what can one do with these theater intendants? They wish to do me honor,—pehah! and since I yielded once to the wishes of your King Ludwig, of course I can't refuse our good Grand Duke. Well, now his intendant has once more proved to the world that Liszt cannot write an opera!"

Florian endeavored to lead the Master's thoughts into another direction by giving him a humorous account of last night's battle of words between Peter Gais and the baron. But Liszt was not in the humor for laughing. On the contrary, he grew still more serious and remarked that he remembered Peter Gais well; he had found a good deal of force and originality

in his earlier works, and had expected great things of him; but now Gais seemed to have succumbed to the illusion of greatness, the melancholy fate of strong artistic natures that have failed of success. A few unquestioning worshippers, who confirmed the misunderstood genius in his illusion, often had a worse effect upon him than complete seclusion.

"I will tell you something, my dear Saint Florian," he said, a melancholy smile playing about his mouth. "The artist's mission is sublime but sad. He is driven with demoniac force to a complete sacrifice to the public. Those queer wights, who, like dwarfs of the underworld, fashion rich ornaments with the sweat of their brows and carefully hide them away from the light of day in the crevasses of rocks,—they are not artistic natures—never in this world! The artist must go out with his work into the bright sunlight, and when the people reject his gifts with scorn a feeling of such bitter sadness comes over him as perhaps no other human heart can feel. I have not been spared this fate. I have been cruelly reproached for not contenting myself with being admired as the most brilliant virtuoso of my time. I invented something new—the symphonic poem. But people would have liked better to have me stick to my piano-last, like a regular cobbler. They find it perfectly reasonable that a nose-specialist needn't know what nerves there are in the great toe, but when a musician wishes to write poetry without words they call it an impertinence. I am well aware that my works are always performed on my account alone, and not for the public. Ah, yes indeed, believe me, I have tasted the bitterness of the artist's lot! But I have at least one consolation which has

prevented me from falling into the sourness of the misunderstood; it is the consciousness of having furnished you younger ones with a fruitful incentive, and beyond that the joy of having lived to witness the triumph of the 'Stronger one.'— But come now,— we are dawdling away our valuable time. A young man brought me a manuscript yesterday. He's coming this morning at nine for my opinion, because he has no time to wait. So we must hurry or we shall catch it!"

He laughed with good-natured irony and opened a manuscript score bound in green morocco leather. He had not glanced over more than a page or two before he involuntarily knit his bushy brows. Then he went to the piano with the score, placed it on the rack and called upon Florian to play it.

Florian sat down obediently on the piano-stool and began by reading the title:

"Finis Poloniae,
Symphonic Poem by Antonine Preczewalski."

"Well, upon my word!" growled Florian under his breath. He gave, however, no intimation whatever of his acquaintance with the composer. He looked sharply at the notes and raised his hands to strike the keys. Then he let them fall again, bent forward to examine the music more carefully and finally exclaimed with a laugh, "I beg your pardon, Master, that's too high for me!"

"For me too!" laughed Liszt. "Oho, the young man may congratulate himself; he has written something that I can't play!"

The piece began with several bars for the strings alone in the highest possible position. But the high

notes were not, as is customary, scored in the octave below, but were written out with innumerable strokes through the note-stems. Then Liszt sat down at the piano and, leaving out the illegible introduction, played more than half the manuscript through. The work proved to be a totally impossible, mawkish hodgepodge of sounds. At last Liszt angrily slammed the cover to and declared that he would not waste his time on this talentless fellow.

Antonine Przewalski made his appearance promptly at nine o'clock. He had made a very careful toilette and evidently given especially loving attention to his hair and mustache. He made the Master a bow, and then, brushing back his locks, fixed a look of lofty disapproval upon Florian, as much as to say, "Thou art superfluous here, slave. Depart! Here creative souls wish to immerse themselves in the mysteries of their art!"

Florian perfectly understood that his presence at the judgment which was now about to descend upon the singer of "Poland's End" would be painful to him, and, much as he disliked the fellow, he still wished to spare him this humiliation. He therefore asked permission to withdraw, but the Master directed him to remain, saying that he had work for him later.

Liszt's countenance wore an ominous expression as he requested the handsome Antonine to begin by explaining to him the poetic ideas upon which the composition was based. The poor sinner became very much embarrassed. He snorted loudly through his nose and mumbled a number of disjointed, obscure phrases: "Oh, I did not have really ideas — only feelings — music is all feeling — khn — so it is the feelings of the

noble Pole over the fall of his beautiful fatherland and so forth, you understand: at the last he exhorts his wife and child to fidelity — *khn khn* — the national idea and so forth — you understand? — But always first and foremost the deep suffering of the soul!”

Liszt's face darkened in a way that Florian had never before seen. He pointed peremptorily to the piano-stool and said, “Play me that part where the noble Pole exhorts wife and child, *pchah!*”

Przewalski sat down at the instrument and wiped his white forehead with his hand. Then he looked through his manuscript for awhile and finally played a page or two. Suddenly Liszt stepped up from behind, turned the manuscript over to the first page in the very midst of Przewalski's playing and said imperiously, “Thank you, that will do! now play that!”

With trembling hands Antonine produced a senseless jingle on the highest keys. After a few measures Liszt called a halt and inquired what that meant. Antonine could find no reply; he gagged and snorted and stared at the notes with such an expression of misery that even Florian pitied him.

But Liszt kept at him. “I will tell you what it is,” he cried. “It's just a jumble of Polish nonsense! One doesn't write such notes — don't you know that? If you don't feel the meaning of music, then don't write music.” Then he turned over to another page, pointed with his finger to a line and asked, “Why do you use the English horn here?”

Przewalski was hurt. He was not going to allow himself to be treated like this, especially in the presence of such a witness; and so he gave his head a toss and replied as defiantly as his insipid nature would

allow, "Oh, excuse me, in such a work — full orchestra — *Finis Poloniae* — *khn* — you must use the English horn, too!"

"You are an insolent fellow!" roared Liszt with a sudden outburst of passion. He grabbed the thin score from the rack and, before the handsome Antonine knew what was coming, he got the green book — whack! slap! — right and left over the ears.

Frightened to death, Antonine fled towards the door, holding up both hands to protect his head. On the threshold he turned and, shaking his fist threateningly at Florian, cried out, half choked with fury, "Villain, you villain, I have to thank you for this! Oh, I will — I will —!" But as Liszt and the so unjustly accused Florian both made a rapid movement in the direction of the door, *Przewalski* left his threat unfinished and fled precipitately from the room.

Breathing heavily, Liszt stood there with his left hand on his forehead and the green book still in his trembling right.

"What happened?" he asked quite sadly. "I struck him! Shame! Shame! I forgot myself! Quick, Florian, run after him and take him his book. He must forgive me. Tell him I will — But no! It was villainous! 'Poland's End' indeed! Yes, to be sure it would be, if all Poles manufactured such music as that! How can he help it that he's not an artist? His father ought to have chastised him, not I. I did wrong. Run, Florian, run — tell him that!"

Florian caught up the score and ran out with it. He was stopped in the anteroom by Secretary *Spiridion*, whose attention had been attracted by the Mas-

ter's scolding, and who had heard the slaps distinctly. He would have liked to learn more about the unprecedented affair, for, as long as he had been in Liszt's service, he had never known his good Master to give way to such a passion. Spiridion had watched the ejected Pole with curiosity from the window, and noticed that after some hesitation, he had left the street and turned into the Park. In four great bounds Florian sprang down the stairs, ran round the Hofgärtnerei and down the nearest Park avenue. At the first path crossing he looked about him and discovered poor Antonine not a hundred yards distant, staggering along in the vicinity of the Roman House.

Florian broke into a trot. When he was within twenty paces of Przewalski the latter turned and hardly had time to recognize his enemy before he started as fast as his short legs could carry him along the nearest path, which led down the steep slope to the lower Park. It was of no avail that Florian called after him, "Here you, hold up a moment! You forgot your manuscript!" Antonine took no notice but ran on down until he was in the valley of the Ilm. There Florian came up with him and caught him by the coat-tails.

"You run for all the world like a bad conscience!" he gasped breathlessly.

Antonine turned and held up his umbrella across his face, as if to defend himself. Breathing heavily, the two enemies looked each other in the eye. Fury mingled with fear distorted Antonine's flabby features. Florian held out the green morocco book and burst out laughing.

"Well, my fine hero," he cried, "do you want to

pitch into me just because I bring you back your things? Here, take it, will you? The Master says to give you his compliments and he's very sorry he took the trouble to use his own hands. I'm sorry too he didn't leave it to me!"

Antonine grabbed the score and started off down the path, but suddenly he turned about and rushed at Florian with upraised umbrella, shrieking in a voice half stifled with rage,

"You dirty dog, you! I have to thank you for this — You talked against me! Ah, *psia krew!*" And raising his umbrella on high he aimed a furious blow at his enemy's head. Florian parried it with his left arm and instantly countered with a resounding slap of his right hand across Antonine's face.

"What's that, you miserable cur?" he cried. "What did you say? I talked against you to the Master? No, no, my dear boy, there was no need of that, after such filthy music as you write! But I'm glad all the same to get an opportunity to give you the licking I've been owing you for breaking your word of honor. You'll have the goodness to remember that receipt, I hope? All right! Now I'll just square our little account!" And at the same time by way of punctuation-marks for this short but sharp harangue, an avalanche of slaps and punches descended upon the handsome Antonine. First his hand would fly to his tingling cheek and then he would double up from a blow in the stomach or stagger with a yell of pain from a punch in the shoulder, meanwhile striking out wildly with his umbrella at his opponent or endeavoring to defend himself with his other arm against Florian's blows. At last Florian yanked the umbrella out of his

hand, gave him a sounding thwack with it across the back, and followed this up with a well-directed punch on the noble nose, from which the red blood spurted. Then he felt better.

He desisted from his attack and looked on unmoved while the unfortunate Antonine picked up umbrella, hat, and the tattered manuscript of "*Finis Poloniae*" from the ground, and, whimpering and cursing with pain and anger, wiped his bleeding nose with his dainty handkerchief.

"There!" cried the elated Florian; "you owed me ten marks and I owed you a licking — now we two are quits!"

Then, seeing pedestrians approaching, he turned and with elastic step reascended the same slope by which he had come. Once on the top he paused a bit to get his breath. He was in extraordinarily good spirits, — exactly as though he had done some especially good deed. He thrust his hands into his pockets and strolled on whistling contentedly. He tried to imagine the joy of Antonine's prospective mother-in-law at sight of her darling boy, and what kind of an account of his painful adventure he would give. Thekla, Florian made no manner of doubt, would send up a prayer of thanksgiving that her hated persecutor had been chastised by a practiced hand.

But Florian's mirthful humor lasted only until he arrived at the entrance of the Hofgärtnerei; for then it suddenly occurred to him that he had carried out his Master's commission in a most extraordinary manner. Without doubt the good old gentleman was walking up and down his room in a state of agitation, bitterly reproaching himself for his lack of self-control and anx-

iously awaiting the messenger who should bring him the reassuring news that the insulted one, even if he had not granted it, had at least received the Master's request for forgiveness. And now Florian had to report that, in addition to the Master's cuffs, he had given the fellow a sound thrashing! No, that would not do at all. In that case it would be no wonder if he got his own ears boxed for his pains. He was suddenly overcome by an absolutely childish fear, and he slunk away from Liszt's door like a bad boy, who, conscious of having done wrong, dares not come into the presence of his teacher. He went home, threw himself on the lounge and pondered.

Something less than half an hour had passed without his being able to come to a decision, when there came a knock at his door, and in response to his "come in," the rotund little figure of Consul Burmester appeared upon the threshold. Florian jumped up from the lounge and cried in a tone of the greatest astonishment, "The consul!"

The little gentleman came forward with an embarrassed smile and said, as he wiped the perspiration from his bald spot with his red silk handkerchief, "Yes, it is, indeed,—it may appear somewhat strange to you that I have taken the liberty of calling, Herr Mayr, but — er —"

"Oh, then you know already?" exclaimed Florian nonplussed.

"Why, of course!" replied Herr Burmester. "I saw you at the station and yesterday at the theater. The head-waiter found out your address for me. I — the fact is I wanted — that is to say, my wife thought — I really never had anything against you,

Herr Mayr — Bless me, that trifling — what shall I call it? — aberration in regard to my daughter was really not so very bad, haha! Of course my wife — well, you understand, as the mother, you know —”

Florian put an end to the consul's stuttering embarrassment by seating him in his place on the sofa, while he himself took a chair opposite, bending far over the table in his curiosity to learn what had brought the little man to him.

“So you really don't know about it yet?” he asked with significant emphasis.

“About what?” inquired the consul. “Oh, possibly you mean the accident to Herr Przewalski? Just fancy, the poor fellow was about to call on Liszt this morning to ask for invitations for us all to his *soirée* this evening, when he stumbled on the stairs and fell down the whole flight, think of that! He banged himself up terribly and had to go to bed at once. You must surely have heard of the accident? — Yes, and as my wife has set her heart on going to the *soirée*, I wanted to ask you if you wouldn't have the great kindness to secure invitations for us?”

“Well, my dear consul,” replied Florian vastly amused, “I fear I shall not be able to do much in that direction either. Matters of that kind are usually arranged for the Master by the ladies; but I'll do what I can if you will promise me to bring *Fräulein Thekla* with you and leave Herr Przewalski at home.”

This the consul promised very willingly and Florian took him at once to the *Hofgärtnerei*. He left him in the anteroom while he himself went in to the Master to ask for the invitations.

Liszt was not especially pleased at the interruption,

and listened but superficially to what Florian told him about his pupil and her parents, the enthusiastic Berlin music-lovers, and immediately put his name to a card of invitation made out in blank. Florian was on the point of withdrawing, when Liszt stopped him with an inquiry as to what the composer of "*Finis Poloniae*" had said to his message.

"Oh, sir," answered Florian crestfallen, "I took it to him all right, but then he said I was to blame for the slaps he got and he struck me, and so — well — I punched his head and gave him such a jolly good pounding that you would have cried for joy, sir!"

"What!" exclaimed Liszt, knitting his brows. But he had to laugh in spite of himself. He playfully caught the gaunt youth by the ear and said, "Ah! ah! Florian, Saint Florian, when are we going to be sensible? *Furor teutonicus*, haha! If we could cure everybody who makes bad music by thrashing him we should have to appoint you head physician!" And he dismissed him with a gracious smile.

Beaming with joy Florian returned to the anteroom, filled in the names upon the invitations and accompanied the consul back to his hotel. On the way he inquired quite casually whether Herr Burmester still had the paper in his possession that Thekla had given him at Florian's request at the Countess Tockenburg's soirée. The consul remembered this incident and inquired why he asked; whereupon Florian related under what circumstances Przewalski had signed the agreement, by which he promised on his word of honor not to give Fräulein Thekla piano lessons.

"And, you know," concluded Florian, "there was an

additional verbal clause agreed on, to the effect that, if the fine gentleman broke his word, I should have the right to call him a low-lived blackguard and thrash him soundly. Well, and so this morning we settled the score. Do you understand the story about falling down stairs now? Oh, yes, *hinc illae lacrimae!*”

The consul stopped short and looked up at the lank youth with honest admiration.

“You gave my — er — son-in-law a licking? Why, that is — splendid! No, nonsense! — I mean — that is, I don’t mind telling you quite confidentially, I absolutely loathe the fellow. My dear Herr Mayr, what a — remarkable person you are! You strike my daughter and since that time she worships you. You thrash my son-in-law and I feel like embracing you for it. I shouldn’t wonder if you thrashed me before you got through, hahaha!”

“May well be, Herr Consul, may well be!” threatened Florian playfully. “If you really give your daughter to that dishrag I won’t take any responsibility!”

“I don’t want to either!” cried the little man earnestly, thrusting his arm through Florian’s. “If it hadn’t been for me they would probably have been married already. You know, my wife —” he subdued his voice to a whisper — “my wife insists on having an artist in the family, and for some extraordinary reason she expects great things of this fellow, because he understands how to worm himself into the best families. And then there is another reason. Thekla was to be a musical genius at any price, and, since nothing at all has come of that, my wife can’t abide the poor girl

any more and would like to get rid of her as soon as possible. After all she is not her own mother — I am not her own father either; we merely adopted her.”

“Indeed!” cried Florian in astonishment.

“But she is really such a good child, and I love her as if she were my own!”

“Of course, and you won’t give her to that idiot, will you?” cried Florian earnestly.

“Sh!” said the consul apprehensively. “You are not married, my young friend; you don’t know what sacrifices a man will consent to in order to have peace and quiet in the house!”

“Do you know, Herr Consul,” exclaimed Florian, “I think I know what I’d do if my wife disturbed my peace like that!” And he made a very significant gesture.

They had now arrived in the vicinity of the “Russischer Hof.” The consul looked round on all sides and up at the windows of the hotel. He evidently feared that his wife would be angry if she saw him talking in such a confidential manner with Herr Mayr. He took a markedly hasty leave of Florian and thanked him once more for the invitations.

Florian shook his hand cordially and said, “Please give my very best regards to Fräulein Thekla, and tell her I shall be awfully glad to see her to-night. Now, sir, if there’s any way in which I can be of service to you — it needn’t be exactly by thrashing anybody, you know,— what little I can do is always yours to command, if it will do Fräulein Thekla any good.” And so saying he took off his hat with an airy flourish and strolled home well content.

He looked forward to the evening with childish an-

ticipation. What would Frau Burmester say when she learned whom her chosen son-in-law had to thank for his swollen nose and his black and blue spots? If the consul should not pluck up courage to tell her, she should hear about it this evening from Florian's own lips. First she should thank him in due form for the invitation, and then he would describe to her how he had chastised the handsome Antonine. Oh, he would revel in her rage! And he would stick to Thekla like a burr. They might do what they liked but they should not shake him off.

As seven o'clock approached, the hour at which the *soirée* at Liszt's was to begin, a feverish impatience seized upon Florian. Half-past six found him ready for the fray, combed and shaved and attired in evening dress and white tie, and from that time he looked at his watch every five minutes to see whether it wasn't yet time to go. At ten minutes to seven he could not longer control his impatience and rushed over to the *Hofgärtnerei* as if he feared he was already behind time. Of course he was the first to arrive; in fact more than twenty minutes passed before the first guests appeared. Meanwhile he arranged with Liszt that he should play one of the Master's Rhapsodies in place of Fräulein Ilonka Badacs, who shortly before had asked to be excused.

"She has probably gone on another urgent little trip!" added Liszt, regarding Florian with a quizzical smile. The young man blushed a little, to be sure, but nevertheless made out to smile in his turn, whereupon the Master pressed his hand and exclaimed with satisfaction, "Ah, I see you have fought it down! Bravo, my son!"

Towards half-past seven appeared the Grand Duke, the Hereditary Grand Duke and consort and the Princess Elizabeth, together with several ladies and gentlemen of their household. Liszt introduced to the sovereigns a number of guests of honor and also several of his pupils, the last being his faithful Saint Florian, whom he recommended warmly to the Grand Duke, in consequence of which the latter said several kind things to the young Bayreuther and expressed the hope to hear a demonstration of his art in the course of the evening. Florian stepped back with a deep bow from before the Grand Duke, and, as he turned round, found himself standing just in front of Consul Burmester and his wife, who had pressed forward, in order, if possible, to catch something of what the Grand Duke was saying.

Before Florian could open his mouth to say "good evening," Frau Burmester spoke to him in a tone of icy politeness with a sour, affected smile.

"We are very much obliged to you, Herr Mayr, for the invitations to this interesting evening. To be sure it was only a trifle for you; I see you are in great favor here."

"Me? Oh, thank you, I can't complain," answered Florian indifferently. "But where is your daughter, please? I don't see Fräulein Thekla!"

With a smile of the purest malice Frau Burmester replied, "No, my daughter regrets deeply to have to give up meeting her stern master again, but she found herself really unable to accompany us."

"Why, what's the meaning of that?" exclaimed Florian, flaring up. He measured the little consul with a look that said plainly, "Is that the way you keep your promise?" And, as the poor man could answer

only with a helpless gesture of regret, he turned again to Frau Olga and said in a low but distinct voice, "Aha, now I understand, madam, Fräulein Thekla is obliged to stay at home and nurse dear Antonine! I wonder whether the model young man told you how the Master expressed his opinion on the subject of 'Poland's End'? Well, I gave him mine in very plain hand-writing, or rather *fist-writing* to take home with him — beautifully black and blue, and a bleeding nose for an exclamation-point at the end! And I put my trade-mark on both his cheeks right under the Master's whacks!" And he held up his gigantic hand with the fingers spread out.

The Frau Consul turned pale under her rouge. Her eyes flashed green like a cat's in the dark, and she hissed at Florian in fury, "You dared to lay hands on our son-in-law? Incredible! If we had known that, we certainly would not have stooped to request you to assist us! You will have to answer to the law for this assault — my husband will see to that! And I will have the matter published in the newspapers! Come, Willy, from now on this person does not exist for us!" So saying she grasped the arm of her husband, who murmured something incoherent, and steered him through the crowd to the other side of the drawing-room.

Florian stood quite a while in the same place, gazing after the pair with a smile of grim derision. He neither saw nor heard what was going on round him. He reflected — and suddenly his mind was made up. The Grand Ducal party sat down and the other guests followed their example, as many as could find seats. A half circle was formed round the grand piano. The concert was clearly about to begin.

Florian hurried up to Liszt just as he was on the point of asking a lady to go to the piano, and begged him excitedly to allow him to play first. Liszt gazed at him in surprise.

"Why, what's the matter, my dear boy? You are all wrought up!"

"Yes, sir, I hardly know myself — the heat — I don't feel so very well — I shall have to go home pretty soon!"

"Hm, hm! A little shaky from last night and the excitement of this morning — pchah, I understand! Well, as you like! You are trembling! Oho, stage-fright, Florian?"

"No, Master, I am all right now, but later —"

And so the Master accompanied him to the piano. Silence ensued immediately, and Florian struck the keys. He developed an astonishing amount of power, the wrathful irritation that had put his nerves on edge coming out in his playing in the form of tempestuous passion. The more delicate passages, to be sure, were less successful, and once or twice he even struck a totally wrong note. Nevertheless the impression made by the performance as a whole was overwhelming and he was rewarded with great applause. Several enthusiastic flatterers even compared his playing to that of Rubinstein, and he also received flattering recognition from the members of the Grand Ducal party. Liszt took him aside and whispered jocosely, "Well, well, Saint Florian, you have put your hands in the wrong place more than once to-day! No doubt you fancied you had the Polish composer with the long name in front of you — you banged the keys so mercilessly!

But all the same — bravo!" With that he gave the young man a light slap on the shoulder and let him go.

As soon as the next piece had begun Florian retired to the anteroom, and, the moment he saw no one was looking, slipped out. He sprang down the stairs as if he were being chased, and ran, rather than walked, to the "Russischer Hof." There he got from the porter the number of the Burmesters' rooms, learned that the Fräulein was at home and ascended the stairs with beating heart. He waited in the corridor until he got hold of a chambermaid, whom he took aside cautiously, and, putting a thaler into her hand, sent to find out whether Thekla was alone in her room or in the company of Herr Przewalski.

The maid nodded intelligently and began by going into the Burmesters' sitting-room after knocking and hearing the words, "Come in." In a few seconds she reappeared giggling and reported to Florian that the Polish gentleman was standing at the door of the Fräulein's bed-room trying to look through the key-hole, and was begging the Fräulein piteously to unlock the door or to come in to him again. He was so excited that he didn't notice he was being watched. Florian then told the girl to knock at Thekla's door.

"Who's there?" asked a voice from within.

"The chambermaid!"

Quick steps were heard and then the bolt was drawn back inside. Then Florian came forward quickly, pushed the maid aside, tiptoed across the threshold, and stood in Thekla's room. Taking off his hat with a low, "God bless you, Fräulein!" he held out his open arms to her. She started back with a low cry,

clasped her head in both hands and gazed up at him in charming confusion.

"Oh, Herr Mayr!" she murmured in such a genuine tone of the most joyful surprise that Florian's heart was in his mouth. He went a step nearer — and then all at once her dark little head lay on his shoulder and her body shook with a succession of sobs.

He bent her head back gently with both hands, looked lovingly into her eyes, and whispered, "Please don't cry now, dear girl — I will help you!"

Then the tears gushed from her eyes and she sobbed aloud, "Oh, I'm so awfully unhappy!"

Florian was about to say more words of comfort when a loud sniffing and snorting was heard from the other side of the sitting-room door. And then Przewalski called out, in an oddly constrained voice that evidently came through a swollen nose, "Thekla darling, my little heart, why cry then? Merciful Father, just come in here! I will be so good to you!"

Thekla freed herself from Florian's arms, stamped angrily with her foot and whispered softly, "Come away quick! I know what I'll do!"

"I know what we'll do too!" replied Florian just as softly. "Put on your prettiest evening gown — I will wait downstairs and then I'll take you to Liszt in triumph! Lord, that'll be a lark! How Frau Burmester will stare! I'll take all the consequences — nobody shall touch you!"

"No, no, that won't do!" exclaimed Thekla, shaking her head energetically. "What good will that do? I'm going away and never coming back! There, my bag is already packed!" She seized a small valise already locked, thrust it into Florian's hands and said,

as she pushed him towards the door, "Go, please! Take that for me! Wait for me at the station — I'll come right after you!"

He tried to make objections, to ask questions, but she only motioned him the more strenuously towards the door, so that there was nothing for him to do but to obey her and steal away as noiselessly as possible with the bag.

Over opposite the hotel in the shadow of the trees he waited, but before five minutes had passed he saw Thekla come out. He allowed her to get a short start and then caught up with her with giant strides. She started with fright and at first would not hear of his walking at her side. But he was able to reassure her by the reminder, that she had almost no acquaintances at all in the place and his were gathered almost without exception at the Liszt soirée. He also endeavored, as they walked along, to persuade her to adopt his original plan and appear suddenly at the soirée leaning on his arm. He had painted for himself the disconcerting effect on the Frau Consul of such a stroke of genius in such fascinating colors, that he was loath to give up the idea. But Thekla objected, quite reasonably, that the consequences of such an exploit could only be calamitous for her. Her mother would only be much stricter with her, and whether the humiliation to which Florian had subjected her fiancé would be sufficient to break off the engagement,— that was very doubtful, to say the least, although, it was true, even her mother had begun to be dissatisfied with Przewalski of late.

"What, you are surely not publicly betrothed?" exclaimed Florian incredulously.

"Oh, dear, yes!" replied Thekla quite mournfully.

"Please, please, Herr Mayr, don't think ill of me for that! Of course I can't abide the man, but mamma gave me no peace. She said I needn't think, with my parentage and my lack of talent, that I could sit down and wait for a prince. She threw it up at me just as meanly as she could that I was the daughter of a chambermaid and a traveling musician; and I might at least show my gratitude for all she had done for me by leaving the choice of a suitable husband to her. With my born love of frivolity and my liking for common people I might be expected to do all sorts of silly things. Oh, Herr Mayr, I ask you — you know me too — I am not frivolous one little bit, am I?"

"You poor little girl!" was all that Florian said in reply.

And Thekla, happy to be able at last to pour out her heart, continued with animation,

"Papa was always on my side and at first he wouldn't hear of the engagement, but in the long run nobody can stand against mamma. At last I came to the conclusion that anything would be better than this terrible state of things in the house, that's not my own parents' house. It's true, I did think of running away, but how could I have supported myself alone? In spite of all the expensive lessons I never learned anything by which I could earn a living, and mamma warned me often enough that I shouldn't have a penny from home if I didn't obey her in every way. Then I must confess, I haven't much courage; why, I've never in my life been allowed to do anything alone. Everything I liked to do was forbidden, and everything that I was allowed to do I had to do by rule and while they were watching me. Of course that makes one as dependent as a child.

Przewalski was quite nice to me too, as far as that's concerned. He promised me on his honor that, as his wife, I should do just as I liked. I shouldn't have to play the piano any more and was to have two hundred marks a month pocket-money, without anybody even asking how I spent it. And all the other girls thought he was such a good-looking man and so very dangerous for the ladies — they all fell in love with him. So at last I concluded that I didn't understand about such things and that it would be all right afterwards — well, and so at last I said yes!"

"Good Lord, it's incredible!" exclaimed Florian through his teeth, doubling up his fist. "I'll tell you what we'll do, Fräulein Thekla — we'll put an announcement in all the big newspapers: 'I declare herewith that my engagement to Herr Antonine Przewalski is broken off.— Thekla Burmester!' Period — blotter — all over!"

"No, no, that'll never do!"

"Of course it'll do; why not?"

"Oh, Herr Mayr, you must know what I mean! He's — why, he's — already kissed me!"

"Oh, blessed simplicity!" laughed Florian, quite touched. "And so you think now the compact is as good as signed and sealed?"

Thekla looked at him dubiously out of the corners of her eyes.

"Why, a girl mustn't allow anybody else but her fiancé to kiss her!" she said doubtfully. "And if he isn't my fiancé any more I shall be ashamed that I let him kiss me."

"Oh, you dear good child!" laughed Florian. "If kissing were such a terrible sin, what would you think

of the widows, who have even had children and still set their caps for another husband, that is, if they're under eighty? You've heard of widows marrying again, haven't you? I've even heard it was much wiser to marry a pretty widow than some young girl that doesn't know anything about life or anything else."

"Oh, you mustn't think I'm so stupid, Herr Mayr!" cried Thekla with droll eagerness. "Until I was engaged I didn't know anything and had awfully silly notions; but afterwards our Marie—you know her too—told me everything. And from that time I couldn't have my fiancé so much as touch me without shuddering. Even before that it was always so disagreeable when he even gave me his hand,—it felt like a dead, flabby lump—ugh! He couldn't give me a good grip, like an honest, healthy person. And when he wanted to kiss me he always went this way, 'khn, khn—you will give a sweet little kiss, my little heart—khn?' After a while it made me quite ill and I wouldn't let him kiss me any more. I'm sure I've heard, and read too, so much about love and all that, but I never heard anything about men saying 'khn—khn!' when they kiss a girl! Oh, dear, and when I think of traveling alone with that man and—all that—no indeed, I'll drown myself first!"

They had arrived in front of the railway station and Florian, who could have listened much longer to her delightfully childish confessions, remarked with a sigh,

"Well, here we are at the station. What now? Where do you want to go? Do you know anyhow if there's a train?"

"Oh, dear, no, I haven't looked up the trains," replied Thekla crestfallen, as she looked about fearfully

in all directions and made for the darkest corner in the waiting-room. "I thought I would go to my friend Erna von Goldammer. You see we were school friends and still write to each other. She knows all about it, and said too, that I shouldn't let myself be forced into it. She's a painter now and lives all alone in Munich; that is, she's studying painting, you know. I'm sure she could take me in and hide me better than anybody!"

"Hm, yes, that wouldn't be at all bad," assented Florian; "but do you know whether she's at home now? At this season the painters are mostly in the country. What'll you do in Munich all alone if your friend isn't there?"

"Oh, dear, yes, she did write that she was going away soon!"

"Have you got enough money?"

"Oh, no," she replied dejectedly. "I haven't much money, only about thirty marks. But I've got all my jewelry with me."

"I'm afraid a ticket to Munich alone costs more than thirty marks, and the conductor wouldn't take gold bracelets! Don't you think the best thing would be to telegraph to Fräulein Erna and find out whether she's at home or not?"

"Oh, but dear Herr Mayr, I can't wait!" wailed Thekla anxiously, grasping his arm. "Just think what will become of me if they catch us here! Preczewski will surely find out soon that I've gone. And if he asks the hotel people — they saw you go out with the hand-bag and me right afterwards — of course they'll look for me here at the station first. Who knows whether he hasn't already fetched papa and mamma from the soirée! We walked so awfully slow!

No, no, we must take the very next train — no matter where it goes!”

“We!” cried Florian perplexed. “You really want me to run away with you?”

“Oh, dear good Herr Mayr, you surely won’t leave me all alone! I’m so afraid and I don’t know at all what to do!”

Florian stood irresolute and pointed to his evening dress.

“But, my dear girl, I can’t very well go traveling about like this. Wait here in some restaurant near by. I’ll drive home quickly, jump into another suit and pack up at least a few things for the night; for we shall have to stay over night somewhere.”

“Oh, please, please,” begged Thekla, looking up at him with her beautiful eyes full of tears, “if you love me just a little bit don’t leave me alone, I’m so frightened! We needn’t go far — only somewhere where we can wait for an answer from Munich to-morrow and pawn my things. Why don’t you want to travel in evening dress? You look so nice in evening dress,— and I can lend you some tooth-powder!”

This last argument was of course decisive. Florian was so enchanted with her charming naïveté and her perfect trustfulness that, in spite of all spectators, he took her in his arms and pressed her to his heart. “You darling girl, you!” he whispered. “Yes, I’ll go with you!”

Then he consulted the time-table and found that a train would leave in ten minutes for Jena, Saalfeld, and further south to Bavaria. He bought two first-class tickets for Jena and at once got into the train with his tearful companion. The ten minutes seemed hor-

ribly long to both of them. She would not allow him to sit beside her, but huddled in the farthest corner and completely enveloped her face with the black veil that encircled her pretty felt hat. She started every time a hasty step approached or a loud word was spoken outside. She trembled all over with fear and clasped her hands tightly in her lap in an effort to control herself. Her nervousness affected Florian. He was obliged to confess to himself that the cause of her apprehension was a very real one. Her idea of the situation was entirely logical. If Herr Przewalski was not altogether too great an ass it was really almost too much to hope, that they should get away unseen. And then, besides all that, the delightful prospect of journeying out into the falling summer night all alone with this darling, enchanting little creature! It was no wonder that Florian trembled with excitement exactly like the helpless little maiden opposite him.

At last their agony was over. The train-doors were slammed to, hurried steps craunched over the gravel and then followed the shrill whistle of the guard.

"Thank the Lord!" cried Florian with a deep sigh of relief. But in the very moment that the first jerk of the locomotive was felt there suddenly arose out on the platform a loud clamor of men's voices: "Halt! Hold up! Stop the train!"

With a cry Thekla started from her seat and staggered over to Florian.

"Oh, my God! My God!—Don't forsake me!" she stammered, half dead with fright, as she clung to him hysterically.

Suddenly there arose before the window a pair of peering eyes and the door-latch was turned. Florian

turned his face away quickly in order not to be recognized, and involuntarily put his two big hands round the waist of the trembling girl, who clung to him so tightly.

"Keep back there — that's first class!" rang out the voice of the guard. The head disappeared from the window, the door of the next compartment was banged to — and the train proceeded on its way.

It was several minutes before Thekla dared to raise her head and look cautiously about her. "What was that?" she whispered, still fearful.

"Nothing at all; a couple that came late!" answered Florian merrily. "Przewalski was a jackass after all — hurrah! You see, now we've got away from them beautifully! Oh, Thekla, sweetheart, isn't running away just gorgeous? Come, give me a kiss!"

And the good girl obediently presented to him without a word her sweet little mouth. And all the way to Jena they did nothing else but kiss and call each other "Thekla — Florian — Florian — Thekla!" And this was quite sufficient to convince these two clever beings that they loved each other dearly and that they could do nothing more sensible than to accept the natural consequences of this astonishing discovery!

CHAPTER XV.

An Escapade

To lovers who find themselves alone together for the first time, one hour seems pitifully short. When the guard opened the door and in cheery tones called their attention to the fact that they were in Jena, they refused to believe it. Thekla blushed scarlet beneath the sly smiling glance of the polite official who would not permit her companion, the fine gentleman in evening dress, to burden himself with her hand-bag. She wrapped her black veil carefully about her head and tripped lightly to the platform behind Florian. It was nearly nine o'clock and already fairly dark; besides so far as they were aware there was not a soul in Jena whom they knew, so they walked towards the exit arm in arm quite unconcerned. Florian did not think it worth the trouble even to button up his overcoat, although a traveler in evening dress with a hand-bag in his hand could not fail to attract the attention of the inhabitants of a small town.

On the open square in front of the station the porters of the various hotels vied eagerly with one another to secure this unusual pair. Florian was on the point of selecting the famous old "Black Bear Inn,"—the inn where once Dr. Luther was found with sword and psalter on the table before him,—when with a gesture of alarm and a suppressed "*Donnerwetter*" he turned suddenly left about, tore the bag out of the porter's

hands, and, dragging the astonished Thekla after him, began to walk rapidly down the street leading to the town.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, what in the world's the matter?" asked Thekla anxiously, trotting along at his side.

But he did not answer until, about a hundred paces away from the station, he looked cautiously around and made sure that they were not followed. "Why, what do you suppose! There were four Weimar people at the station,—they must have been in the train with us,—two Lisztites and the two boys of that crazy Englishman that lives in the same house I do. Now I'd like to know what they want in Jena at this time of night,—especially the English lads who are never allowed to go out without their father! I suppose they've run away too. *Herrgottsa*, what if they recognized me!"

"Oh, they didn't recognize you," cried Thekla carelessly, "it's already quite dark. Besides no one has got anything to say to you; you can do as you please."

"Yes, but I mustn't compromise you," replied Florian still much concerned. "It's got to appear as if you ran away alone or else it will have a very queer look both to your parents and everybody else."

Brave like all women in the first glow of love, Thekla laughed: "Oh, nonsense, it's all the same to me now! I'm so happy that I've got you with me! If you hadn't come to-day, I believe, I'd never have screwed up the courage to start off. I'd have packed my satchel and sat down alongside of it and cried until papa and mamma had come home. Well, and then, in the end, perhaps,—you see, just in despair I might have married that horrid man!"

"You would, in spite of your love for me? Well, I thank you kindly!" said Florian teasingly.

"Now, listen to me," explained Thekla with droll earnestness, clinging 'still more closely to his arm, "Why, I didn't even know that I loved you. For a long time I felt something or other but I was afraid to own it even to myself. For me you were always the strict Herr Mayr, my respected teacher. And afterwards when you were so kind to me and helped me and promised to beat all the horrid piano people, then I put all my trust in you; but that was only gratitude, it wasn't just exactly real love!"

"Well, to be sure, of course not," rejoined Florian merrily. "Now tell me, what was it made this real love come so suddenly?"

"Oh, you! Don't ask me such questions!" she pouted, snuggling up to him lovingly. "I'd never have thought that you really and truly cared anything about me at all, if you hadn't been so awfully nice and dear to me this evening."

"So, that was it, was it? It was the first kiss, wasn't it, my sweetheart, that's when the real love came? D'ye know, I'd never have dared do a thing like that if the Herr Consul hadn't told me this morning that you weren't his own daughter at all. You see, I'm a son of very plain people; there's nothing fine about me; I've known that for a long time. To start in and make love to the daughter of a swell rich family,—that wouldn't ever have come into my head. The fact is, I don't like your aristocratic ladies very much anyway. When I was giving you piano lessons, you were nothing to me but a stupid little goose without any talent; only you were so pretty and childlike,—

you were ahead of the rest on that score. Then, even after I had slapped you, when you wrote me such a sweet letter, then, you see, there was the beginning of my liking you, kind of. But then I got out of Berlin and went to Liszt and—well, that's the way things go. I had a lot of other things to think about. But, d'ye know, day before yesterday when I saw you again so unexpectedly at the station, my heart began to thump away so, as if there were some higher being trying to make me understand,— don't you know, as if it wanted to say: 'Now, look there, she is the nicest, the best, the dearest of all; if you only hold fast to her, you'll find out what real happiness means!' And now for two whole days you haven't been out of my head."

"Really, as long as that?" mocked Thekla gaily.

He joined in her merriment and went on bantering: "Now, if I knew for sure that Thekla wouldn't marry Pan Prositlaus after all, why then I might think I really had something to get conceited about."

"Shame on you, I think you're very nasty! Can you honestly think such a thing of me now?"

"Perhaps in the end you might even marry me?" said Florian innocently.

"Well, who else, I'd like to know?" she cried almost hurt. "Do you mean to desert me now? I'll never go back to the Burmesters anyway and if you let me go out into the world alone, I don't know what I shall do,— so, you see, the best thing we can do is to go and get married right away."

"Well, upon my word, you are a clever little minx!" cried Florian, laughing heartily. But when she went on to spin out her plan in detail and demanded with

childlike persistence a decision on the spot, he began to feel a little worried and directed her attention first of all to the fact that for marrying money was necessary.

"Oh, is that all?" cried Thekla. "Why, papa and mamma have lots of money."

"Yes, but — when you run away with a man they don't want anything to do with, they won't give you a penny, for, you see, you're not their child to begin with and they haven't any obligations towards you. But even supposing they put a million on the table for you, — do you think I'd take it unless I was already earning enough to support myself independently?"

"A million! Oh, I sha'n't get anything like that much!" cried Thekla. "Papa told me, I shall have two hundred thousand marks, no more."

"No more?" Florian stopped. They were directly under a street lamp and with shy admiration he looked at the little girl who was to receive in one lump two hundred thousand marks. He had never seen such a thing close by before.

Thekla probably misunderstood his exclamation for in a tone of almost anxious apology, she replied: "Oh, later on I shall be sure to get a good deal more. Papa hasn't anyone in particular to leave all his money to. But for the present I think we can get along with that pretty well. Besides you can give piano lessons and I'm not a bit extravagant; in fact the cheapest things to eat are the things I like best."

Again Florian could not help laughing. "I say, I'm frightfully hungry. I haven't had anything to eat since one o'clock this afternoon. But what shall we do now? If we go to a restaurant we're likely as not to run right into the arms of these fellows from Weimar.

I think the most sensible thing to do is to go to the hotel and have supper served in the room."

Then they inquired their way to the "Black Bear Inn." The headwaiter as well as the porter regarded the pair with ill-concealed distrust, although Florian had now buttoned his overcoat up to the throat. But that tiny little satchel as the entire luggage of a tall gentleman in a silk hat and of a very young lady in a traveling gown,—that was altogether too suspicious! Besides where did the pair come from that they came on foot? Another thing still was suspicious: Florian wore no gloves and consequently the headwaiter had no difficulty in discovering that he wore no wedding ring. He murmured some excuse and went to fetch the proprietor.

Of course the headwaiter's singular behavior did not escape Florian's notice. In the presence of the proprietor he tried to assume as confident a manner as possible; he asked if a party from Weimar had arrived.

"From Weimar?" replied the host with a searching look, "yes, an elderly gentleman with a young wife. Let me see, their name is — I can tell you in a moment."

"It isn't necessary; we have no concern with the old gentleman and his young wife," said Florian indifferently. "Give us two good rooms one flight up if you've got them."

Whether it was that the host was a man of fewer prejudices than the headwaiter or that he was unwilling to let slip a chance of making some money,—at all events, he bowed most respectfully and ordered the waiter to conduct the guests to the rooms, adjoining that occupied by the couple from Weimar.

Arrived in their apartment, the headwaiter lighted the candles and inquired if they would come down to the dining-room. Florian refused and said they would have supper served in their room and he ordered a lamp and a bill of fare.

"Very good, sir," said the headwaiter, "the lady and gentleman next door are also served in their rooms." And with this the fellow took the liberty of smiling.

Florian dismissed him, feeling that this meaning smile must be a special peculiarity of Thuringian headwaiters. But it made him uncomfortable so that when his charming little sweetheart had laid aside hat, duster, and gloves and came up to him radiant with happiness, he could not bring himself to the point of folding her in his arms and kissing her soundly, as she evidently wished him to do. He only pressed her outstretched hands hurriedly and then went to the window and gazed out upon the Schlossplatz.

Burghers sat chatting at their doors; young girls were strolling about the square, linked arm in arm in twos and threes, and teasing one another about the young fellows they met; from some quarter came the joyous sound of student songs agreeably subdued, and in the clear night sky the stars were blinking and paling in the light of the rising moon. Everything breathed of peace and cosy contentment but Florian's soul was filled with disquiet. Although only twenty-three, he was a sober-minded and morally mature man. His conscience was suddenly awake to the fact that he had assumed a deucedly serious moral responsibility in carrying out this otherwise so charming elopement. His brief apprenticeship in Weimar had it is true, already sufficed to cure him of his old Philistine prejudice that

these love affairs were sinful in themselves, and now, so far as he was personally concerned, he never hesitated to accept in a grateful spirit the sweet boons that fortune threw into his lap but in this case it was perfectly clear to him that the trusting surrender of this poor tormented girl could only bring misfortune upon her. If it should become known that Thekla had gone off with him alone and stayed over night in the hotel, the world would need no other proof of her "fall," not even should he swear to the contrary by the most sacred oaths. And then in the eyes of this same world her shrewish foster-mother would be justified in every cruelty. And how should he, the homeless musician, shield her from this effectively for any length of time? If he insisted upon marrying the child, the mother would undoubtedly force her husband to withhold the dot and then they would both be doomed to certain wretchedness. His career as an artist would be at an end and he would have drawn this helpless creature into a sphere of life whose severe demands she was in no way fitted to meet. He was far from being such a romantic simpleton as to imagine that love even in the cheerless perspective of a matrimonial eternity would suffice to help them over the awkward difficulties of a miserable reality.

The waiter brought the lamp and the bill of fare. Florian ordered the best there was to be had and with it a bottle of good wine. Since this was to be a parting feast, it should at least be a generous one. He purposely refrained from ordering champagne for that had the reputation of being a dangerous procurer and he had solemnly resolved not to yield to temptation in any form.

When the waiter had gone, Florian was about to resume his place at the window but Thekla threw her arms around his neck and with a look of touching anxiety whispered: "Don't you love me any more?"

That is the droll question which in the beginning of love springs to the lips of every girl and a man in love can answer it in no other way but by kisses and tender reassurances. Florian accordingly followed the old established custom. He at once assumed an expression of kindly affection;—why should he spoil the dear child's pleasure? They might be allowed to snatch a few hours of merry companionship and then they would have to say good-by for, ah, who knows how long? He took her by the arm and led her to the window. They leaned out and chatted tenderly, innocently, until the supper was served.

Both had healthy appetites and the excellent repast did much to dispel Florian's melancholy and to loosen Thekla's tongue. With a vivacity for which he had not given her credit, she gave him a description of her life hitherto, of her education, and of her few trifling experiences with men. They were all the usual insignificant incidents in the life of a well guarded daughter of good family. But the way in which Thekla spoke of them unconsciously comprised a most trenchant criticism of the life led by aristocratic young ladies in general and of her foster-parents in particular and proved at the same time that this child had already formed some very reasonable notions concerning the perversities and the ridiculous and narrow views that had hampered her at every step. Florian took genuine pleasure in this discovery for until now, if he would make an honest confession, he had thought Thekla a

little bit stupid; he had regarded her as one of those agreeable creatures, wholly useless for any of the serious purposes of life, such as the higher social classes produce in dangerous abundance as articles of luxury.

He listened to her with real delight; only when at last in her eagerness she spoke a little too loud, he checked her with a "please, *più piano*. The people next door don't need to hear everything."

"Oh, nonsense," retorted Thekla lightly. "They don't hear us; they're talking too loud themselves."

Florian put his hand to his ear and listened at the door at the left. Yes, it was true; the talking and laughing there was certainly loud enough and anyone listening at the door could hear a good deal. Thekla resumed the conversation but Florian had grown inattentive and kept pricking up his ears in the direction of the adjoining room. The young woman's laugh in that room disquieted him; the voice seemed to him so familiar and the peculiar intonation reminded him of —

Suddenly he sprang up in great excitement and commanding Thekla to be quiet, put his ear to the door. Oh, he was not mistaken. "He is dear friend of mine, very famous artist!" he heard "the young wife" say. There was no longer any doubt. The lady's companion spoke too softly for him to recognize the voice. Florian stooped to peep through the keyhole, but the key was so turned that nothing could be seen.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked the astonished Thekla in an anxious whisper. "You've turned quite pale; what kind of horrid people are they in there?"

Florian had come back to the table. The hand with which he steadied himself trembled. He avoided Thekla's questioning look and replied in much con-

fusion: "We are lost if those people see us here together!"

He paid no heed to Thekla's curious questions or her proposals. Now he walked excitedly on tiptoe up and down the room, now stopped to listen at the door, now took his place at table again and worried down a few mouthfuls. Thekla of course soon caught his excitement. She left untasted the appetizing bit of bread and cheese which she had just prepared and followed him. With her own little handkerchief she dried the cold beads of anxiety from his brow and begged him in a whisper for an explanation of his strange behavior. He was scarcely able to speak. He looked up at her with an expression of deep pain and choked hoarsely: "That is the punishment!"

"Punishment?—what for?" whispered Thekla a little hurt. "What wrong have I done? Is it a sin for us to love each other?"

"No, no, no! You are innocent—I—it concerns only me." With that he pulled himself together and went over to the door to ring the bell.

"What are you going to do?" cried Thekla anxiously.

"I must go," replied Florian in a whisper. "I'll just pay and,—that is,—no,—I'd better leave you what money you need. I think I've enough to take you to Munich. But telegraph first thing to-morrow morning to your friend and start as soon as you get word. I must get out of here without being seen,—perhaps there's still a train to Weimar. We mustn't be caught here,—not at any price!"

"Yes, but suppose Erna isn't there, what shall I do then?"

"Well, then —" Florian did not know what to say.

Thekla burst into tears. "Oh dear, oh dear! Now you're going to desert me, too! You see, you don't love me after all!"

"It's just because I do love you, my sweetheart!"

He was about to go over to her and comfort her when he heard the door of the adjoining room open and its occupants go out into the corridor in animated discussion. Even Thekla listened in suspense. The footsteps died away. Florian deliberated what was to be done next and Thekla did not venture to disturb his meditations. A few minutes passed thus before he could reach a decision.

Suddenly there were again sounds of life in the corridor. Hurried steps and excited whispers approached from the staircase; at the door of the next room there was a brief consultation,—then a few quick steps,—and the next minute, without the ceremony of knocking the door opened and there entered — Mr. Crookes, senior, followed by Fräulein Ilonka Badacs! An angry exclamation from Florian, a frightened scream from Thekla, and dumb astonishment on the part of the intruders! Then Thekla did the best thing possible under the circumstances: quickly covering her face with her napkin, she ran into the bedroom adjoining, which was intended for her use.

With a few rapid strides Florian went up to Mr. Crookes, shook his fist in his face, and shouted at him hoarsely: "What do you want here, sir? You just get out —!"

Mr. Crookes at once assumed a boxing attitude and broke in with extraordinary fluency: "Oh, Herr

Mayr, I am very glad to meet you.— Don't hit me or I shall knock you down. Go into the next room with this lady right away; my sons are coming up the stairs! They must not find me with this lady,— do you understand? If you don't understand, I'll knock you down!"

Florian scarcely knew whether he understood or not; neither could he make up his mind whether to laugh at the Englishman who was so supremely ludicrous in his indescribable excitement or to let it come to fisticuffs, but at this juncture Fräulein Ilonka seized him roughly by the arm and without a word of explanation pulled him through the door. She dragged and shoved him along the corridor and pushed him into her room.

"What does this mean? What in the world are you thinking of?" cried Florian quite out of breath.

Ilonka answered with a mocking laugh: "Oh, Saint Florian! fine saint! I tell all in Weimar, if you don't do as I bid. March! Sit down on sofa,— arm around me that way,— champagne glass in your hand! Oho! No resistance or else — that's the way. Now let the chase begin."

It was the highest time for at that moment there came a knock at the door and in response to Ilonka's loud "come in" Bob and Dick Crookes with Herr Ispirescu and another young Lisztite of Ilonka's particular circle crossed the threshold; with an exclamation of surprise that came as from one throat and with faces a yard long they remained standing at the door.

Florian disengaged himself roughly from Ilonka's embrace and sprang to his feet. His surprise and excitement had the appearance of being so entirely natural that the four young fellows could not help believing it

genuine. No one spoke a word. They stared at one another completely dumfounded and bewildered.

Suddenly like a ray of light it came over Florian that herein lay his salvation. He now had witnesses that it was with another he had run away to Jena. Thekla Burmester was not known to any of these people. Crookes, senior, would have to hold his tongue in any case, or else he would be the most thoroughly disgraced of the lot. The only point then was to induce Ilonka to keep the secret. In that case this very questionable escapade might still pass off without evil results. But that fate should have ordained Ilonka of all women to catch him here with her successor! This Ilonka whom he had so cruelly offended! He was now delivered into her hands, wholly defenseless. If she wanted revenge, now was her perfect chance! Here was another case in which punishment had followed close upon the heels of misconduct and Florian, the poor sinner, began to conceive a mighty respect for divine justice. He was glad, however, that for the present at least the worst danger had been warded off from Thekla's innocent head and that thought helped him to recover his self-possession. He went up to the four young gentlemen and addressed them in a manner befitting the occasion: "Well, gentlemen, this is really — What do you want here? It seems to me, to say the least,— extraordinary!"

The four youngsters were quite at their wits' end. Each looked helplessly at the others; then they stammered a few very clumsy excuses and much ashamed were about to take themselves off, when Ilonka rooted them to the spot again by bursting into loud laughter.

"Is too comical,— having awful fun! Just look,

dear friend Florian, how they stand there, handsome young gentlemen! But Mr. Bob and Mr. Dick, what will father say when he looks to-night in beds and finds all empty? Merciful heavens, that will be big, big disaster when you get home! Oh, poor young gentlemen!"

The Crookes boys turned scarlet with anger under the mockery of the malicious lady. They saw Herr Mayr smiling, too, and there was a tell-tale twitching in the faces of their two companions. They were convinced that someone had played a practical joke on them in order to have fun with them afterwards when their strict "governor" should have inflicted condign punishment on them as runaways. Master Dick who had more temperament than his brother was the first to take heart and speak out frankly. He advanced a few steps towards the table on the other side of which Ilonka was sitting, made a quick bow, and said: "I beg your pardon, Fräulein, for running in here this way. These fellows told us we should find our father here."

"What, you lost your father?" cried Ilonka, indescribably delighted.

"Oh, no," replied Dick boldly, "but we noticed that father was in love with you. These fellows told us he had run away with you to-day. You told these fellows yourself you were going to stop at this hotel!"

"But, really, young gentlemen I must beg of you,—"

interrupted Ilonka, playing the injured one.

Bob went up to Dick to quiet him but Dick would not listen to anything more. His eyes flashed and he threatened the two young Lisztites with a fist that promised many things. "Oh, I'll pound these chaps to a

pulp! Damn them. Come along, Bob, let's do them up!"

He rushed at the two youths with a gesture so threatening that they dodged to one side with great celerity and found it best to seek protection with Florian and his lady. For some time all six of them talked at once. Fräulein Badacs expressed indignation that they should come to blows in her presence. Dick raged and cursed in English, while Bob endeavored to calm him. Herr Ispirescu tried to make the case clear to Florian. The other young Lisztite heaped reproaches upon Fräulein Badacs for lying to them. Finally Florian threatened to punch the whole pack of them in the nose if they did not behave at once. Herr Ispirescu at last got Florian into a corner and thus eventually succeeded in explaining to him the cause of this remarkable incident. He and his companion had, it seems, made friends with the young Crookes and had entered into a conspiracy with Fräulein Badacs to emancipate these two lively, prepossessing lads from their father's tyranny. To this end Ilonka had proposed to play upon the old Englishman's amorous propensities. She had little difficulty in getting Mr. Crookes to make the proposition himself of going off for a little pleasure trip and she had arranged with her fellow conspirators that they should follow her to Jena and at an appointed hour in the "Black Bear Inn" surprise her in a tête-à-tête with this austere abstainer. That the two sons should be of the party formed, it is true, no part of the original programme; the young people had carried that out on their own account because by that means they expected to produce a particularly powerful effect.

Florian could not help laughing outright, for the thought of the old hypocrite caught in so compromising a situation by his two sons was, indeed, irresistibly ludicrous. When the others heard Florian laugh, the confusion of excited voices was suddenly hushed and all eyes were fastened expectantly upon him. Going up to the two young Englishmen, he slapped them familiarly on the shoulder and said: "Well, young gentlemen, the matter is very simple,—let's all be glad it's turned out as it has. You haven't got to pound, pommel, or punch any of us, for we're all as innocent as new-born lambs. Of course I'm the biggest little lamb of the lot for I didn't know anything about it at all. Nobody has lied to you, either, for it's quite true your father had planned a little escapade of this sort. But, you see,—well Fräulein and I,—you know, we're,—we're good friends, too, and when I asked her if she wouldn't run over to Jena with me this evening, why, she respected my prior claims and came off with me. Besides I can take my oath that our friend, Fräulein Ilonka, is very glad she didn't play the old gentleman such a mean trick,—aren't you now?"

Ilonka gave Florian a grateful look and with a sweet, shamefaced expression replied: "Why, of course,—was sorry already I promised you young people such silly things! Wasn't nice to play such joke on Mr. Crookes. The old man is not to blame to fall in love with me."

"Well, rather not!" cried Florian merrily. "There's nothing to be ashamed of in that, by Jove! Just look at her, this Fräulein Ilonka!"

By this gallant turn the mood of gayety was restored at one stroke and nothing remained to be done but to

relieve the two young Englishmen of all fear of their father's wrath. This Florian succeeded in doing by simply promising to tell the old gentleman that it was he, Florian, who had led the lads astray and induced them to make this little excursion. That settled, they all made preparations to spend the rest of the evening as pleasantly as possible in some beer resort. Florian had wisely rejected the proposition to make use of the restaurant of the "Black Bear Inn" for their entertainment, for some careless remark of the waiter might reveal the presence of the other pair.

Ilonka requested the young gentlemen to go on ahead. Then, locking the door behind them, she turned quickly to Florian and, squeezing both his hands, cried with animation: "Bravo! dear friend. You did that very well. Now I will help you. What young girl is that? Out with it quick!"

In a few words Florian told her the whole truth.

"Hm, hm — stupid business!" murmured Ilonka thoughtfully. "Is the girl real nice? Will Saint Florian marry the girl?"

"Yes, she is nice all right and marry her I would if I could."

"Hold on,— I know what we do!" She took Florian by the arm and led him along the corridor to the door of the room in which Thekla had taken refuge. There she bade him knock and call her softly by name.

Thekla opened the door at once and was not a little astonished to see the strange lady enter with Florian. Before he could say a word, Ilonka already held Thekla in her arms and had kissed her heartily on both cheeks.

"My dear Fräulein," she exclaimed warmly, "Good Lord, how you have cried! Please, please, be quite

calm. My friend Mayr has told me all. Will all come out right, *chère petite!* Have two beds in my room. You sleep with me and to-morrow morning we all three consider what we do. I give you my sacred word of honor you will not marry that disgusting creature!"

The poor, tearstained Thekla was evidently glad to have anyone take charge of her and willingly followed the strange lady to her room. There Ilonka rang for the waiter to clear away the dinner things and commissioned Florian to look after the unfortunate Mr. Crookes.

He had locked himself in in the adjoining room and fearfully awaited his fate. As soon as Florian had made himself known, he opened the door a very little and cautiously peeped through the crack. Not until he had convinced himself that Florian was really alone, did he allow him to enter.

"Well, Mr. Crookes, these are fine games you're up to!" said Florian, raising his forefinger admonishingly. He kept back the laughter with difficulty by biting his lips when he confronted this dried up old sinner who stared at him with a look of abject misery.

"Oh, dear, oh, dear!" groaned Mr. Crookes, holding his head in both his hands. "I heard my sons' voices. What did my sons say? How did they get here?"

"Oh, Mr. Crookes, you were incautious," replied Florian solemnly. "Love blinded you, yes, yes, yes! Your sons saw it plainly and so they plotted with their friends to watch you. Yes, indeed, if I hadn't accidentally been on hand! What do you think? You'd have been in a nice mess!"

Mr. Crookes shook his head thoughtfully. "Dear

me, dear me, I don't at all understand how these boys found out that I went to Jena."

"Yes, that's so. *Donnerwetter!* It is singular," cried Florian and he thought the matter over for awhile. Then he added slyly: "Someone must have followed you to the station, you know, and listened and found out what place you bought your tickets for."

"Dear me, dear me!" sighed Mr. Crookes. "I never should have thought that those boys were so damned clever."

"Well, now you see it. That sort of things always brings its own punishment sooner or later. Believe me, my dear Mr. Crookes. Grown-up sons should not be treated as if they were little children. But I'll tell you one thing: give me your word of honor as a gentleman that in the future you'll give Messrs. Bob and Dick their freedom as is right and proper,—and I'll help you out of this scrape."

Mr. Crookes thereupon shook hands with Florian and promised to do as he asked. Florian told him to take the first train back to Weimar in the morning. When his boys returned by a later train, he was to receive them in a perfectly unconcerned manner and just tease them a little for running off that way. Florian for his part agreed to remove one way or another the last speck of suspicion that might still lurk in the young gentlemen's minds.

Mr. Crookes was grateful beyond measure and called Florian his best friend.

Without in the corridor Ilonka was waiting for Florian. He reported to her the happy outcome of his diplomatic mission. Then he wanted to go in and

say good-by to Thekla but that Ilonka would not permit.

“Let poor child alone!” she whispered to him. “Is too much excited. To-morrow morning all three of us think out something. The girl is so nice,—understand perfectly that you want marry her. Girls like that are just made to be married! If they can love such a bear as you,—well, is their business, is not my affair. But I will help her. I spit on the Herr Consul’s bald head and as for the fine mamma, I scratch her eyes out!”

They were descending the stairs, as she said this, side by side. Florian seized her hand and pressed it hard; with heartfelt warmth he whispered: “You dear incomprehensible Ilonka. You are a good girl through and through!”

CHAPTER XVI

A Sorry Farewell

THE prolonged nocturnal symposium which followed the eventful evening at the "Black Bear Inn" completely removed the danger that Mr. Crookes ran of being surprised by his sons in the first morning train to Weimar; for all the participators in this hilarious "beer-tour" slept until nine o'clock the next morning, with the single exception of Florian, who, in spite of the evening's revels, made out to rise at six and take the first train. It had suddenly occurred to him as he was returning to the hotel the night before, that he could not without a good excuse shirk his regular morning hour with Liszt without involving himself in a network of falsehood. He would never in the world have dared to confess to the Master what a stupid and dangerous act of folly he had been on the point of committing,—to abduct a respectable girl, hardly more than a child, from her parents while they were guests at Liszt's own house, and stay with her over night at the best known hotel in Jena! No, that was altogether too much, and the Master would hardly accept any excuse for it, even if he believed everything that Florian could offer in his own defense. He had therefore asked Ilonka to make his excuses to Thekla and to do with the poor girl as she thought best.

Just as on the morning of his first fall, Florian brought home with him this time as well a severe

moral "katzenjammer," and it was so clearly written in his face that Liszt attributed it without more ado to the headache he had complained of the evening before, and soon sent the young man home that he might take proper care of himself.

Florian scourged his soul cruelly and chastised his heart with scorpions as he lay half dressed on his bed endeavoring to make up for his lost sleep. He could justify the abduction to his conscience; it was so honestly meant and had proved so harmless. There was no manner of doubt that taking away a loving and beloved maiden from hard-hearted parents who maltreated her in an unjustifiable manner belonged to the inalienable rights of man! Thekla loved and trusted him; therefore he was undoubtedly the one called upon to help her. But was he worthy of this trust? "No!" thundered his conscience with appalling distinctness in his ears. It is true, his warm, tender heart had absolutely melted with sympathy yesterday at the helplessness of the charming, lovesick child, and he had confessed his own love for her plainly enough by innumerable kisses. But in sober reality, how was it with this love of his for her? Woeful — ah, woeful indeed! When he had met Ilonka, the incomprehensively good and yet naughty, the old passion had come over him once more impetuously and seized upon his heart with clinging talons. After all she had been his first love, and, in spite of the desperate efforts he had made, with the aid of his moral indignation, to cast her off, he could not banish her from his heart. He was obliged to confess to himself that he had been very much relieved the night before, when Ilonka's intervention had released him from the painful responsibility for the

consequences of his rashness. Florian was quite well aware that Thekla was not only far prettier than Ilonka, but united in herself all the qualities necessary to guarantee to the man she loved permanent happiness. She was so young and fresh and pure, so sweet and warm, devoted and natural, in spite of her artificial "higher" education; while Ilonka's charms were already on the wane and needed the subtlest secrets of the toilette to make them tell. Her virtue was not worth a penny, and the man who gave her his heart was sure to pay for a moment of intoxication with an eternity of doubt. And yet all the ardent longing of his senses belonged to this woman. He was fascinated by her wit, her gypsylike temperament and her irresponsible good-heartedness, to such a degree that he would have been ready to run away with her that very day, although he was perfectly aware that, perhaps inside of a week, she might send him home and throw herself into the arms of another, who was in a position to offer her amusements of a more exciting kind, and, what was more to the point, able to spend more on her.

Florian said all this to himself and once more used up conscientiously the whole rich vocabulary of vigorous expletives of which he was master.

Meanwhile in the "Black Bear Inn" at Jena, Thekla had awakened, but, as her companion still slept soundly she did not venture to rise for fear of disturbing her, and thus she found plenty of time in which to think over her situation. The evening before in her excitement and alarm she had let them do whatever they wanted with her, but in the light of the new day the assistance which this strange woman had given her seemed an act of pure violence. She was still in igno-

rance of the name of the lady, who lay beside her in bed with open mouth, snoring gently; who was she and in what relation did she stand to Florian? If she had been all alone with the knowledge that her Florian was sleeping in the next room, she would have awakened calm and happy in the steadfast assurance that he would decide correctly for her and nothing more that was disagreeable could happen to her; but this stranger with her large mouth open, her faded features, her hard Tartar cheek-bones and complexion that seemed spotted in the gray morning light, the traces of powder and rouge which she had rubbed off but carelessly when she went to bed,—this stranger to whom Florian had not even found it worth his while to introduce her, inspired her with involuntary aversion. How did this woman dare to come into her life? To be sure, Florian had committed her to her care unhesitatingly and had then gone away with her just as if it were a matter of course for him to obey her wishes.

Thekla's first sensation at these thoughts was one of jealousy. It did not occur to her that Florian's behavior was proof that he must have reason to trust the woman. She only felt hurt that they treated her as if she were a being without any will of her own, and she felt ashamed of herself that she had been weak enough to shed tears in the presence of this stranger, and to allow herself to be ruled so unresistingly. With a sudden resolve she threw back the bed-clothes in order to get up quietly, dress, and look for her protector. But then it occurred to her that she had no idea where Florian slept. She could not run into the room of the old gentleman, who had appeared so suddenly the evening before. Or should she go down and order her

breakfast alone in the dining-room, and wait until Florian looked for her? No, that wouldn't do either. She drew the bed-clothes over her again, hid her face in the pillows, and began to cry.

Ilonka finally awoke. It was already past nine o'clock. In the meantime Thekla had dressed and was sitting on the sofa with her elbows on the table and her face hidden in her hands. Ilonka yawned loudly, rubbed her eyes and called out good humoredly, "*Ah bon jour, mad'moiselle! Mais vous vous êtes levée de bonne heure. Comment ça va-t-il? Bien dormi—hein?*"

Thekla uncovered her tearful little face and shrugged her shoulders without a word.

"*Mais, ma chère enfant, pourquoi si triste? Il n'y a pas de quoi—tout va bien!*" And with one jump she was out of bed, ran over to Thekla in her pink silk nightgown, sat down beside her on the sofa and gave her a resounding kiss on either cheek.

Thekla disengaged herself in a frightened way and said in childish tones, "Mayn't I go to Herr Mayr now?"

Ilonka was highly amused and laughed aloud. She embraced Thekla again with ardor and exclaimed, "*Cher petit ange*,—you are charming, you dear little thing! Oh, this Herr Mayr, how he is to envy! How late is it?—nine o'clock?—Oh, then Herr Mayr is in Weimar a long time and works with the Master."

"Herr Mayr is—is—not here?" The words came out spasmodic and trembling, and poor Thekla turned quite pale.

"But, dear young lady," said Ilonka soothingly,

"Why we need Herr Mayr? We can straighten your affair much better alone. The men always do such stupid things in such matters." And then she told her that she had arranged last night with Florian that she was to take her to Weimar and keep her in her rooms until they had extracted a promise from her foster-parents that the engagement should be broken.

But Thekla burst into tears again and stubbornly declared that she would not return to Weimar nor go back to her parents under any circumstances.

All Ilonka's persuasiveness was of no avail. Thekla obstinately insisted upon carrying out her original plan of joining her Munich friend.

There was, therefore, absolutely nothing for Ilonka to do but hold her peace for the present and think of her toilette. She already stood at the washstand, when Thekla suddenly approached her and called out in a tone that was actually defiant, "Why, I don't even know who you are!"

Thereupon Ilonka took hold of her long silk night-gown affectedly with her finger tips, dropped a dancing-school curtsey and said, "If you will please, gracious Fräulein, my name is Badacs Ilonka, pianist Hungarian, and Herr Mayr is an old, very dear friend of me. You can trust me very sure. But now you go down, you have nothing in stomach and you are nervous. You take coffee *en attendant*, and I come right away."

Thekla followed this good advice, and after she had taken a little breakfast really felt better and more hopeful. She wrote out a telegram to her friend Erna, but as she had never in her life written a telegram her-

self she was afraid to send it off, and, therefore, waited until Ilonka came down in order to submit it for her approval.

After a little pruning the dispatch was sent, as Ilonka had discovered that Thekla had her own stubborn little head and was likely to do the rashest things unless one was very careful with her. It was only in the afternoon that the answer from Munich arrived: "Addressee out of town, whereabouts unknown."

Thekla's disappointment was keen, and there remained nothing for her to do, helpless as she now found herself, but to place herself unreservedly in the hands of Fräulein Badaes. Moreover the few hours that they had been obliged to spend together had pretty well sufficed to overcome Thekla's original aversion to Florian's obliging friend. Ilonka's confident manner had not failed to have its effect on Thekla, and, although the latter could not quite get rid of her jealous suspicions, she nevertheless could not help finding the warm-hearted and extremely amusing Hungarian very agreeable.

The two young ladies arrived about three in the afternoon without further mishap in Weimar, where Ilonka accompanied her protégée in one of the celebrated canary-yellow public carriages (the capital could boast as many as four of these vehicles) to her own home. Immediately afterwards she betook herself to the "Russischer Hof."

The porter's face took on a doubtful expression as Fräulein Badaes, whom he knew well, asked to see Consul Burmester. The Burmesters had received alarming news and would hardly care to receive visitors.

"Oh, just say I have news from Fräulein daugh-

ter — they will receive me already!" replied Ilonka with a knowing smile.

"Oh, that's another matter!" ejaculated the porter, his curiosity aroused. Then he sent a waiter up with the message and Fräulein Badacs's card. The man fairly flew upstairs. It was evident that the whole hotel had been thrown into a state of agitation by Thekla's flight. And the porter, of his own accord, then informed Ilonka that Fräulein Burmester had gone away the night before with a gentleman in evening-dress and silk hat and had not yet returned, on which account her parents and fiancé had naturally been thrown into the greatest anxiety. Telegrams had been sent and received and the police probably already put in possession of the facts.

"What you say?" cried Ilonka, feigning high indignation. "What you talk about! She just went to see lady friend and they made little trip. I cannot understand why letter is not arrive. Fräulein has written right off!"

With that she ran upstairs without waiting to be detained longer by curious questions. The waiter met her with the announcement that the Consul and his wife would be very glad to receive her, and upstairs in the corridor the Burmesters and Przewalski were already waiting impatiently to conduct her to their drawing-room.

As soon as Ilonka had been bowed into the room Frau Burmester bolted the door on the inside and then rustled up to her guest excitedly.

"You bring us news of our daughter, my dear Fräulein?"

"Yes, madam, I do," replied Ilonka. Then she fixed

her eyes on the handsome Antonine, examined him closely and finally asked, pointing at him unceremoniously with her finger, "Beg pardon, is that the fiancé? I think I know him according to description on the nose."

"Khn, khn!" snorted Przewalski, quickly raising his handkerchief to the damaged organ. "I cannot see my nose has something to do with the matter!"

"Oh, yes it has, my dear sir!" laughed Ilonka good-humoredly. "Your whole worthy person has whole lot to do with it. For on your account only is Fräulein gone off. I understand it now very easy, too!"

Antonine paused in the midst of his embarrassed nose-blowing, got red as a turkey and snarled angrily, "Oh,— khn — what you mean by that? If you want insult me — khn, khn — I will demand —!"

"Oh, don't bother us with your sensitiveness now!" interrupted Frau Burmester sharply, in feverish curiosity to ascertain what had become of her poor, misguided child, as she expressed it.

At the same time the consul offered Ilonka a chair and whispered, "Please do not keep us longer in suspense — pay no attention to that person!"

All four sat down and then Ilonka began to tell her story quite cheerily. "Well, you see, the matter, it is very simple: you wanted force your daughter marry man who she did not like. Poor girl could not stand it any longer and is run away — I find very sensible!"

Frau Burmester: "My dear young lady, you forget what a daughter owes her parents, and —"

Przewalski: "Yes indeed — khn — you forget anyhow —"

Frau Burmester: "I really wish you would keep quiet!"

The consul: "I beg of you, tell us how and where you met our daughter."

This slight interruption over, Ilonka proceeded with her narrative, addressing herself to the consul. "We met quite alone in ladies' compartment second class. Poor girl sat in corner and cried. I was sorry — just asked her why she cried. *Eh bien*, we made acquaintance — told me everything."

Frau Burmester: "But, good heavens, where is she? We telegraphed everywhere; and she had no money either!"

Ilonka merely raised her hand slightly as a protest against interruption and proceeded.

"So I said, dear child, is all right not to stand that — only donkeys stand everything — but you too much not enough experienced and haven't any money. What you want in the world alone, I said. I go to your parents and make proposal, I said. So now I make proposal: you announce engagement is all over and smashed and promise in writing you not force Fräulein daughter marry any more. Then Fräulein daughter come right back to you to-day."

"Indeed! And if we refuse to do this?" exclaimed Frau Burmester majestically. And Przewalski seconded her: "Exactly, khn — if we refuse, eh?"

"You just keep still, Przewalski, will you?" screamed Frau Burmester, bringing her hand down on the table. "You're to blame for the whole thing! You listen at the door and hear strange voices and hear Thekla go out and do nothing, absolutely nothing at all! You stay here and order a luxurious dinner and the

most expensive wine, in spite of the fact that the people told you Thekla had gone away with a gentleman, with a gentleman whom you had good reason to know!"

"Oh, I beg your pardon, mother!" stammered the miserable Antonine; "I could not go out in the street — khn — in my condition! Oh, just wait, I thought — I will —"

"Oh, you thought — you will!" mocked Frau Burmester. "What will you do? You were simply frightened to death, that's all!"

Before the startled Przewalski could get out a word in his own defense the consul suddenly sprang from his chair, seized it by the back with both hands and cried in a voice trembling with excitement, "Damme, you're a — you are — if you had any honor about you, you would know what your duty was here! You ought to have withdrawn from this engagement long ago! My daughter can't abide you, and I — nor I either — I despise you — I — you may go to the devil! I don't want to see you any more! Get out of here, do you understand me?"

"Willy!" cried Frau Burmester petrified with amazement. She had never seen her husband like this before.

The handsome Antonine had turned as white as the handkerchief with which he still continued to fumble about his swollen nose. He gasped miserably for breath like a fish out of water, stared about wildly and staggered towards the door. On the threshold he turned round once more, shook his clenched fist at Fräulein Badacs and stammered out with difficulty, "Oh, I know who I have to thank for this — I do not believe one

word! I know this Fräulein — she is also such a — such a Lisztite! She is in a plot with this Mayr!”

“What’s that?” screamed Ilonka, taking a few rapid steps towards him. “What you dare to say? You get out or — I have very elastic wrist!”

Frau Burmester stepped quickly between the two and spread out her arms protectingly before her repudiated son-in-law.

“Go, Herr Przewalski!” she said persuasively. “I regret extremely that my husband was so violent, but you will understand that, under the present circumstances, you cannot insist upon an alliance with us. It was not to be. Go in the Lord, dear Herr Przewalski!”

Antonine held the door-knob in his hand and hesitated a moment longer. “Oh, yes,” he panted, “I will go! But I will revenge myself — khn! I will abandon this land where violence triumphs over the soul — I will say shame and shake the dust from my shoes! Good-by, madam, I leave at once. To you, Herr Consul, I have nothing to say more — khn, khn — you will be so kind to pay my little bill!” So saying he crossed the threshold and slammed the door behind him.

“God be praised and thanked!” cried the consul with the deepest satisfaction, as he let himself fall back into his chair with a sigh of relief.

Ilonka went over to him, gave him her right hand and said delightedly, “Oh, Herr Consul, you have made me such joy — I thank you in Fräulein Thekla’s name! Gracious lady will also promise me to ask Fräulein in future when it is to marry?”

"You see that we are endeavoring to comply with our daughter's wishes," replied Frau Burmester evasively.

Ilonka thought it best, all things considered, not to insist upon a written promise. The consul's behavior had made such an impression on her that she concluded Thekla's freedom of choice was guaranteed for the future, and she therefore took her leave promising to bring the little runaway back to her parents that very day.

Frau Burmester accompanied her courteously to the door and expressed her thanks for bringing about the reconciliation in a few formal phrases. At the very last she inquired whether Ilonka, since she had been living in Weimar for some time, was not acquainted with a certain Herr Mayr, a favorite pupil of Liszt.

"But of course, gracious lady!" replied Ilonka without hesitation. "He is very celebrated artist and dear friend of me!"

"Indeed! The hotel people said that my daughter went away in the company of a gentleman, who, according to the description, can only be Herr Mayr; and about the same time he disappeared from the soirée at Liszt's. Did my daughter say anything to you about that?"

"Oh, not a word, gracious lady," prevaricated Ilonka with a look of the frankest innocence. "Shall I ask Herr Mayr when I shall see him? Or perhaps he is in love with Fräulein Thekla and wanted to run away with her! Well, well, this dear old Mayr—I never would think that of him! I shall send him to you so he can explain himself."

"No, no, please don't!" exclaimed Frau Burmester quickly. "We shall leave town as soon as we have found Thekla. I hope she is here in the city?"

"Of course! We have slept together last night in Jena, and now she is here at my house. Oh, gracious lady, you may believe me, that you would never have seen her once more again if you had not thrown out that handsome gentleman right before my very eyes! Well now, we will be happy — in little half hour you can embrace Fräulein Thekla again!"

The little consul went over past his wife to Ilonka and accompanied her out of the room in the most respectful manner, as if she were a great lady, and even down the stairs, taking leave of her with cordial thanks.

When Ilonka got home she found her protégée in good company. Florian Mayr had called several times in the course of the day, but, upon hearing in the afternoon that Fräulein Badacs had returned accompanied by another young lady but had gone out again immediately afterwards, he had concluded after some hesitation to wait. However attractive a *tête-à-tête* with the loving and devoted girl might be, Florian, nevertheless, after the severe self-examination to which he had just subjected himself, dreaded the possible consequences of such a confidential interview. If he should be weak again and allow himself to make protestations of affection which might perhaps seem like lies to him later, but upon which Thekla would base all her hopes! He might even have slunk away again like a coward if Thekla had not recognized his voice and made him come in.

As Ilonka entered she found Thekla sitting in the corner of the sofa with her face hidden in her hands,

and Florian standing with his back to her at the window.

"Haha!" she cried merrily, "have I caught you, you turtle-doves! You jump so far away from one another for fright! Oh, what—you need not mind me! But what is the matter? The Fräulein has cried? And the young man makes a face! Oho—you quarrel already? Or is it only parting pains?"

"Oh, pshaw!" exclaimed Thekla bluntly, rising and dashing the tears out of her eyes. And Florian smiled with difficulty and murmured something undistinguishable about a slight misunderstanding.

Ilonka had tact enough not to ask any more questions. She gave a very graphic account of her visit to the Burmesters and of the surprisingly vigorous manner in which the little consul had given his son-in-law his definite walking-ticket. Thekla was so astonished at this unexpected change in her destiny that she burst into fresh tears and wanted to return at once to her "dear, good, only papa." They then agreed as to what answers Thekla should make to her parents' questions concerning the rôle which Herr Mayr had played in her flight, so that her narrative should not be at variance with that of Ilonka. Then Thekla got ready to go out. It did not escape Ilonka that Florian still had something on his mind, and she therefore made an excuse to retire to her bed-room.

As soon as they were alone Florian went to Thekla and whispered,

"Thekla, darling, we can't part like this! Come, give me your hand and say you're not angry with me! I tell you, if I were independent and had a position that would halfway justify my marrying, then it would

be quite another thing,— then I wouldn't care a hang what people, or even your foster-parents, said. If we two only once came to the conclusion that we loved each other, then I wouldn't ask —”

“ Exactly, that's just the conclusion you haven't come to! ” interrupted Thekla, with difficulty keeping back the tears. “ You mustn't think I'm as stupid as that, Herr Mayr! You simply don't love me or you wouldn't talk so much about your commonsense and your good intentions. You only said all that yesterday just because I was frightened and threw myself right into your arms. But I know why you're sorry about it to-day! No, no, you needn't give yourself any trouble — you can't talk me out of that! ”

“ Thekla! ”

“ No, no — I know what I know! It's quite right, too, that everything has turned out so! My darling, good, only papa will see that nothing bad happens to me any more! Please forget how I behaved yesterday! I'd much rather take piano lessons again and all that than be a burden to somebody who doesn't care for me! ”

“ Thekla, that's not true! ”

“ Yes, it is! — Well, good-by, Herr Mayr! Thank you for your assistance yesterday! ”

Deeply moved he grasped the little hand that she held out to him and pressed a kiss on the light-brown glove. He tried to draw her to him and look into her eyes. “ Thekla, won't you give me even one last kiss? ” he whispered sorrowfully.

“ Why, Herr Mayr, what do you think I am? ” she exclaimed in a low voice, as she disengaged herself gently but firmly from his clasp. Then she went to

the door quickly and threw it open with as much noise as possible, as a signal to Ilonka, who forthwith emerged from her bed-room and went out with Thekla without taking any further notice of Florian.—

In about half an hour Ilonka returned and was somewhat surprised to find Master Florian still in her rooms. He had smoked up a whole bunch of her cigarettes and was sitting on the sofa enveloped in thick clouds.

“Well?” inquired Florian with a deep sigh.

“Well?” mocked Ilonka, “There you are still! What you make for an expression! And Thekla too! Said good-by so cold — little more and she might have give me a tip! I cannot understand what can it mean.”

“Lord above, she’s jealous!” exclaimed Florian irritably. “That we two have been mixed up together somehow — she got on to that right away with the celebrated instinct that you women folks have for such things!”

“Oh, go away!” cried Ilonka really astonished. “Jealous — of me! *Mi a menynykö!* Haha! Splendid joke — I am so sorry I tore up your last love-letter!”

“Oh, come now, Ilonka, you know very well —”

“What?”

“Well, that Thekla isn’t altogether wrong,” hesitated Florian somewhat embarrassed. Ilonka advanced to the table in front of the sofa, fanned away the tobacco-smoke, and looked mockingly into Florian’s face.

“What you mean, Saint Florian? You got an attack of sentimentality, or you already looking for a substitute for the time you cannot have Thekla?”

"Oh, what are you talking about?" cried Florian in a huff. "You needn't impute any such mean motives as that to me. The matter lies just this way, that I — confound it. It isn't everyone that can change sweethearts so easily and forget certain things!"

Ilonka shrugged her shoulders, laughed, and threw herself into the nearest chair. She stretched out her legs, crossed her feet and began to whistle. Finally she remarked lightly, "Dear friend, you are not respectable! About certain things one doesn't talk." And, as he found no reply to this, she continued after a short pause, "I want know nothing about your love. I am good for friendship and be jolly — everything else is great bore. Who says I keep him from marry any nice girl that he likes — he tells lie and insult me!"

"But I can't make the child believe that I love nobody but her and never cared for anybody else, and that I couldn't wait to get married — that would be a pack of lies indeed!"

"Good Lord, you did not tell her —?"

"Well, I couldn't exactly deny it outright."

Ilonka threw her head back and clasped her hands. "Holy Florian, what you are for a donkey — please not be angry! You understand not one little bit about love, not for one penny! If you go tell all girls in love such truths, you'll have big lot of success!"

Florian gazed at her with an expression of none too luminous comprehension and growled, "I don't want to tell lies!"

She turned up her nose contemptuously. "Indeed! If you won't tell lies, you never make your wife happy,— all wives want be swindled, and a man never

ought get married before he learn tell fine love-lies! You, my dear Florian, you still stupid just like little puppy,—please not get angry—you are great lover of frankness. If I wanted be polite I say, you are naïve. But you may believe me, nobody but old women have taste for naïve men! So! Now you just march out here and try digest this wisdom!”

And Florian departed thence in a most discontented frame of mind.

But this was to be only the commencement of his discontent, only a kind of introductory scherzo. Black thunder-clouds lowered over Florian's head. To be sure the Burmesters had left town with Thekla that very day, and he therefore had no hostilities to expect from them. On the other hand Przewalski had lingered forty-eight hours in Weimar and had made the very best use of this time to deal his deadly enemy an effectual blow. Chance had favored him in its execution by guiding him to a restaurant where he stumbled upon a familiar acquaintance from Berlin, who proved to be none other than the young Lisztite who had made the trip to Jena in the company of Ispirescu and the Crookes. Przewalski had intentionally turned the conversation upon Florian Mayr, and as his friend was one of the conspirators who had sworn to avenge the humiliation of Miss Robertson and Fräulein Schönflies, it was naturally not long before he came out with everything he knew, or thought he knew, of Florian's arrogance, tyranny, and violence. And finally he announced to the eagerly hearkening Antonine with particularly malicious joy that he had it in his power to unmask this hypocrite. It was not difficult to persuade him to tell the story of the Jena

adventure with all its details. He would never for a moment believe, he said, that Florian had gone to Jena with Fräulein Badacs, because, just as the train was on the point of starting, he had opened the door of a first-class apartment by mistake and seen inside a man whom he had at once recognized by his long, thin brown hair as Florian Mayr, and a young lady in a felt hat and a black veil who couldn't possibly have been Fräulein Badacs. And at the station in Jena his companions were sure they had recognized Florian Mayr's figure in the darkness, as he made off with a young lady on his arm. At the hotel he found out from the waiter that *two* couples had arrived at the "Black Bear Inn," and that one of them was a gentleman in evening-dress with a very young lady in a felt hat and a black veil, who registered as "P. P. Müller and sister, America." And the other pair consisted of the Hungarian lady with an elderly gentleman who registered as "Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, England." Everybody knew that Mayr had had an affair with Ilonka Badacs and the whole comedy at the hotel had only been put in scene by this obliging young lady in order to cover the tracks of her virtuous friend.

Two days after this conversation took place, Liszt silently gave Florian, in lieu of his usual morning greeting, a letter which bore no signature but which described the whole adventure at the "Black Bear Inn" with relentless fidelity. In it the Master was most solemnly warned against a person who took advantage of his amiability and good-heartedness to use him as an accomplice by inducing him to invite to his house in the evening the parents of a young girl whom this person intended to abduct,—against a person whose shameless-

ness went so far as to allow himself to be caught with one mistress in order to conceal his adventure with another, and who even dared to secrete from her parents in the house of his first mistress this second sweetheart, an estimable young girl of highly respectable family, the fiancée of a gentleman of immaculate reputation.

“Well, Florian, what do you say to this scoundrelly trick?” asked Liszt, as his pupil laid the letter down without a word. “I have never taken any notice whatever of anonymous denunciations — I have a contempt for cowardice, pchah! I know you will tell me the truth. Look here — here are five other dirty scrawls. Each of them contains about the same thing. And they also say that you used violence to prevent people seeing me, that you laid hands on ladies and threw them downstairs, that you assaulted the Pole, to whom I sent you to ask pardon in my name, in so brutal a manner in the Park, that he could hardly drag himself home, and — that you mix yourself up in other people’s affairs in the most obtrusive way and treat my most devoted friends most uncivilly, and — I don’t know what all! Now then, pray vindicate yourself if you can! It’s all woman’s gossip, isn’t it — all lies from A to Z? Just say one word and I’ll believe you!”

But Florian was not able to utter a word. Pale and trembling, gazing at his kind Master with staring eyes, he stood there. That, then, was a picture of his character as seen by the eyes of his enemies! And the worst of it was that there was not a single direct untruth in it all, at least not in the first letter. How was it possible for him to persuade anyone who could not read his whole heart that, in spite of evil appearances,

everything had passed off in the most harmless manner? Before his own conscience he had already pronounced himself guilty, and he had lied to his beloved Master too! How should he begin his defense?—where should he end? In any case he had behaved like a green and muddle-headed youngster. Ilonka had told him that clearly enough, and he had not denied it even to himself. He was not a criminal, but he most certainly was an ass that deserved a beating. And it is often harder to confess to asinine acts than to serious sins. And so Florian stood there abashed with hanging head and could not say a word.

At last Liszt grew impatient. He took him by the shoulder, gave him an encouraging shake, and cried, "Wake up, my son, speak—I don't believe a word of it, do you hear? Answer me: is it true that you pretended to have a headache in order to sneak away from my *soirée* and run away with the daughter of these Berlin people whom you obliged me to invite?"

"Yes, sir,—that is, I didn't exactly run—"

"Did you go to Jena with her alone?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Did you pass the night with her at the hotel?"

"Yes, sir,—that is, she slept with *Fräulein Badacs*."

"With the *Badacs*? Ah, *sapristi*! So it's all true!"

Florian was silent.

Liszt strode several times excitedly up and down the room; then he stopped in front of Florian and asked gently,

"Tell me, my son, was that—at least—love?"

Florian gave a frightened shudder, ran his trembling fingers through his hair, made several vain attempts to

speak and finally blurted out confusedly, "I don't know!"

"What, you don't know?" exclaimed Liszt indignantly. "So it was merely a reckless trifling with a human being's destiny! Oh, shame, I say, shame on you!"

"Oh, no, no, no!" wailed Florian. "Indeed it wasn't that!"

"What else was it? You know that I'm no Philistine. If young people with heedless, artistic blood indulge in trifling liaisons that entail no obligation — all right — I shut both eyes tight! Let free beings enjoy together the happy hours as they flee. That makes life better worth living and is not a question of morals at all. But what you have been doing — why, that tramples morality under foot! To seduce a respectable girl, a fiancée, and without even the excuse of love, — to make me an accomplice of such a low trick while setting yourself up at the same time as a judge of morals — ah, no, no — I have made a mistake in you! You have hurt me cruelly, pchah — I promised myself so much from that head of yours — it hasn't stood the test — that frank, open forehead of yours and your honest eyes have lied to me! Oh, that wounds my heart! May God bring you back again to your real self! I will pray for you, my son — but go now, go!"

Florian left the room in which he had passed the happiest days of his life. He felt powerless to defend himself in the face of the suffering that he had caused his fatherly friend and Master. He rushed home precipitately, locked himself in his room, and stormed and wept for hours without ceasing. Then he made up his

mind to open his heart to the Master by letter and try to give him a calm explanation of his singular behavior. But it proved to be beyond his power; he could hardly put together more than half a dozen coherent sentences. So he abandoned the idea, packed up his belongings, and, that very afternoon, without saying good-by to a single soul, he turned his back upon the pleasant City of the Muses, where he had found so many joys and honors, so much new wisdom and, alas, such bitter pain.

CHAPTER XVII

The Heaviest Blow

FLORIAN returned to his parents' house in Bayreuth and there in that quiet peaceful home, surrounded by the love and admiration of the simple old people, he sought to recover his equanimity. He told them that his nerves had suffered from overwork and that he needed a brief period of rest and mental recreation. That Liszt had sent him away in anger because of his moral turpitude was the very last thing he could have confessed to his parents. His mother noticed his reticent and subdued manner at once and felt that some secret sorrow was weighing on his heart more than his nervous trouble. His father was disquieted chiefly by the fact that Florian had spent in Weimar almost all of his Berlin savings and was still without definite prospects for the future. Time and again he impressed upon his son the necessity of losing no time in looking about for a lucrative position; he called him a heedless fool and chid him for allowing himself to be lured away from his connections in Berlin which might be called almost brilliant without so much as a glimmer of a well-founded hope in exchange for them. Florian very soon grew heartily weary of the old gentleman's everlasting complaints and in consequence his daily walks became longer and longer that he might have an excuse when he got home to shut himself up in his room

and stretch out wearily on his bed and think and dream by the hour. He occupied the remainder of his time about the house in all kinds of necessary and unnecessary tasks in the line of cabinet-, locksmith-, or house-painting-work. He had a real passion for hand-labor in any form and if his parents had not raised such violent objections to the everlasting hammering, the smell of lime and varnish, and the superfluous expenditure, Florian would have had the whole place freshly papered and painted and all the furniture newly varnished and polished.

He came home to dinner one fine day, his face fairly beaming with joy. Returning from one of his walks, he had found a letter from Franz Liszt in which the Master begged his pardon for having allowed himself to be forced into a hasty judgment by those anonymous accusations and by Florian's own peculiar behavior. The true state of the case he had learned from Ilonka Badaes and now he thought he understood also the reason for Florian's silence. He bade him be of good courage and not to take his unfortunate indiscretion too tragically. A few years hence he would probably laugh heartily over the affair. But in spite of all this, it would still be better for him not to return to Weimar just yet but to give people time to forget the scandal. Otherwise it would not be so easy to calm the excitement of the "Swarm" and everybody would say: Papa Liszt was old and feeble and let himself be tyrannized over by every "Strong-Mayr" that came along; nothing else was to be expected of him. If Florian would come to Rome in the winter or to Weimar in the spring, he would be most cordially welcome in the circle of the faithful. Accompanying this letter was a recommenda-

tion, couched in the warmest, most flattering terms, which was to smooth his way as concert virtuoso.

Florian congratulated himself upon the happy inspiration which had led him to write to his friend, Ilonka, from Bayreuth; otherwise the Master would not have known his address. It was a great piece of good fortune, too, to have had the clever, experienced, and eloquent Ilonka plead his cause; he himself was too deeply involved in the whirl of contradictory emotions to be his own advocate. His good parents were not a little astonished at the miracle which Liszt's letter wrought. At a single stroke Florian's depression vanished and he became again the good, frank, cheerful son of former days. He abandoned his work about the house and plunged into piano practice with an uncanny zeal in order to get together a concert repertoire upon which he could rely. He also applied at once to a prominent Berlin agency to arrange for him a concert tour for the summer through the fashionable watering-places of Germany. Inside of a week his fingers which had grown stiff with rough work had again become so flexible that he could to some extent depend upon them. Then he ventured to call at the Villa Wahnfried which he had never before entered; he left a letter of introduction which at his request Liszt had taken special pains to write for him to his son-in-law. A few evenings later he was invited to tea and after supper he was asked to play. From the music which Florian laid before him, Wagner selected some compositions of Liszt, which are scarcely ever played in public and which demand a quite unusually fine understanding of the poetical and musical characteristics of their composer. As Florian was particularly fond of these

pieces and had studied them under Liszt's direction, he was able to interpret them in a really most finished style. Wagner and his wife overwhelmed him with praise, and certain distinguished citizens of Bayreuth who were among the listeners were proud that a native of Bayreuth should have attained so high a rank. Of course the fame of Florian's success spread at once through the little town. From that time on all his acquaintances saluted him with a certain respect; he had become one of the "big bugs" over night. After this he was frequently invited to Wahnfried and enjoyed many an hour full of rich inspiration, although, to be sure, the cordial reception which the great master, Wagner, gave him had no further practical results, for at that time he already had another young musician working with him and consequently had no employment for Florian. But he carried away with him a warm recommendation in black and white.

Meanwhile the Berlin agency had secured for him a series of engagements for concerts in Wiesbaden, Homburg, Ems, Kissingen, and other watering-places, great and small, and full of joyous hopes he entered upon his concert tour. He had every reason to be satisfied with the applause and the praise of the critics, which he everywhere won, but on the whole he was a little disappointed. His personal appearance was not prepossessing enough to lend the unfortunate name of Mayr any special power of attraction. His looks did not impress the ladies; he did not know how to pose and assume a lot of strange mannerisms nor to beat the tom-tom of self-advertisement. So it resulted that he rarely played to full houses and hence he made only a modest profit. When he went back to Berlin at the be-

ginning of winter, his whole surplus for almost five months of work amounted to but little more than two thousand marks. Florian was clear-headed enough to perceive that there was no great future before him as a traveling virtuoso and that it behooved him to establish himself in a secure position as teacher and conductor. He then conceived a bold plan: he would bring out Liszt's oratorio of *Christ* in Berlin.

All too soon he was to learn what a difficult task he had set himself. The agency which had managed his concerts for him was absolutely not to be induced, considering their small gains from his work, to undertake the matter. Equally disinclined were the large musical organizations, academies, societies, etc. A Mæcenas to advance the costs was not to be found and the directors of the prominent orchestral and vocal organizations gave him distinctly to understand that if the performance of a great choral work of Liszt's which the public could neither appreciate nor comprehend, was to be brought about at all in Berlin it would be possible only under the ægis of a famous and tried conductor, but "*Christ* by Liszt under the direction of Florian Mayr . . ." such an announcement would not lure a cat! Nevertheless Florian was not to be daunted. When all his efforts had failed he resolved to risk a performance at his own expense.

Everything is to be had for money, even the best things in art. But the best is dear,—that Florian discovered at once in his very first efforts to secure the services of some vocalists of reputation for his undertaking. They demanded so much that he would have had scarcely anything left for orchestra and chorus. Then he tried his luck with the "promising" talents

who had not yet won a name. Some of them who had to work hard for their daily bread were glad to close with him on modest terms, but those who had enough to live on were not to be allured by the prospect of so small a return to place their art at the service of a work by which they could not hope greatly to further their ambition. Some of them were candid enough to tell Florian this in so many words: Some Herr Mayr or other wanted to produce a frightfully long and difficult work of Liszt's! What fame was to be won by this? In the great city of Berlin Liszt had at best only a very small following and his church music, being strongly Catholic, was even less to the taste of Berliners than, say, his symphonic poems which, as it was, were almost never heard at important concerts. The Liszt cult was confined to the circle of the youngest German musicians and to a small part of the high aristocracy. If he were at least in a position to say that he had this clique behind him; if he could say: Prince A. has taken fifty tickets for my concert, Princess B. twenty, the Duke of C. a dozen, and so on. Had it not even occurred to him to secure the coöperation of the Countess Tockenburg who, as Wagner's friend and enthusiastic champion of the new German music, would be the natural patroness of his undertaking? The Countess Tockenburg, as the wife of an ambassador, occupied a prominent position at court and would surely have been able to induce sundry royal highnesses to attend his concert. Had that been the case, he would have had a whole line of competent singers at his disposal and, what is more, gratis; for then his concert would have procured them invitations to the musical functions at those aristocratic houses which were of prime importance to beginners as

being the mints where new names received the official imprint. But without this powerful backing he was only a pianist warmly recommended by Wagner and Liszt,—and that meant very little, for in these days eminent pianists were counted by the dozen and Liszt's good-hearted liberality in writing recommendations was already fairly notorious. Even the great Master's presence would be no great attraction for Liszt, whom the present generation had not heard as a piano virtuoso no longer retained any great popularity. To be sure, if the Master himself would sit down at the piano and play a few show pieces, then the highest concert rates might be asked and a full house assured.

Florian angrily choked down these truths. The people, who so admonished him, doubtless knew the conditions in Berlin better than he. Besides his own meager experiences entirely sufficed to convince him that they were right. The Countess Tockenburg! He wondered if he could not perhaps procure her patronage after all, if he should knock at her door now, armed with the recommendations of both the great masters. But she had driven him from her presence in shame and disgrace, nay, had even had him shown out by an officer! It had been a case of being "thrown out" of the most thorough description. If after such a humiliation he should again approach the countess as a petitioner, he certainly had not a single spark of pride left. And yet after a long painful struggle with himself he determined to make the sacrifice for the sake of the good cause. One abominably rainy day towards the end of October, he treated himself to a droschke, first-class, in order to save his clothes and make a good impression, and drove up before the palace Unter den

Linden. He sent up his card upon which he had taken care to write: "recommended by Liszt and Wagner." It was some time before the lackey returned with the message that the countess regretted that she was too much occupied at present to receive him; but she neglected to mention any time when he might come again. It was therefore quite plain that she remembered the painful occurrence of the year before and did not wish to have anything to do with him.

That miserable Przewalski had been able without any special effort to produce his wretched patchwork at the Singakademie because he had aristocratic acquaintances behind him and the Burmester purse, while for the magnificent work of a master of the very first rank there were to be found neither public nor artists in a city of a million inhabitants! That could not be, that must not be! All the defiant courage of Florian's nature, all his strong youthful idealism, rebelled at the thought. He would bring all the prophecies of the doubters to shame, he would prove to these lukewarm weaklings what a powerful personality could do. He went to an important agent who for a large percentage engaged for him the necessary soloists and a large part of the chorus. For this he had to pay the man cash down. There was just one choral society of mixed voices whose services he was able to get for nothing through personal connections. Since the first orchestra of Berlin was too expensive, he had to content himself with a second rate one, which, however, because of the numerous rehearsals he was obliged to bargain for, turned out in the end dear enough. Finally he succeeded also, after knocking in vain at many doors, in finding a church in the Southwest dis-

trict, whose consistory had the courage to put their Protestant place of worship at the disposal of the Catholic Master.

He now considered all his difficulties happily overcome. The costs, to be sure, considerably exceeded his capital but he was certain that the money for tickets would amply cover the deficit. He put confidence in the amiable phrases of the newspaper editors who promised to support his undertaking and he was more than happy when he found his first reading notice in a large number of the papers, from which, to be sure, many exuberant passages had been elided that he had penned in praise of the great work. Then he attacked his task with fiery zeal. In his large room in the Luisenplatz at the widow Stoltenhagen's which upon his return to Berlin he had fortunately found unoccupied, he held his solo rehearsals every forenoon. Here new and sad experiences awaited him. Some of the singers proved to be so unmusical that it was impossible to teach them their difficult parts; their places had to be filled by others. Some who already considered themselves great artists lost patience and grumbled at the number of rehearsals and at Florian's rigid exactions. The worry over these presumptuous persons who approached their tasks quite without enthusiasm and yet wanted to be handled as if they were eggs, drove Florian almost to despair. Two only, of the women singers, evinced the slightest gratitude for the infinite pains he took with them and they by their zeal and devotion restored his courage. In the chorus, too, he took some modest pleasure. These rehearsals were held evenings in the hall of a schoolhouse. There was a deal of sighing and groaning over the difficulties of the work and over the

never-ending evenings of practice and the members in ever increasing numbers stayed away, with or without adequate excuses. But still, on the whole, they showed a good will and from evening to evening the mighty work assumed an ever firmer form. Florian's heart beat fast when he mounted the director's stand at the first orchestral rehearsal. He was most intimately familiar with the score and at home, baton in hand, he had so often gone through the work that he knew every difficult entrance by heart; but he had never led a great body of instruments before and he knew well with what malicious pleasure old orchestra players detected at once every uncertainty on the part of a young director and spitefully tormented him by inattention or even by intentionally playing false notes. But for Florian the first rehearsal proved to be also a first triumph. The musicians, who at first had chatted together and laughed and annoyed him greatly by all kinds of nonsense and superfluous questions, soon discovered that they had to do with a man who understood his business thoroughly and went at it with artistic seriousness. At the close of the rehearsal the entire orchestra broke into applause and an old bassoonist, who had played under Wagner in Dresden in 1848, pressed his hand and congratulated him in cordial, simple words, which, after all the disappointments and annoyances he had suffered, filled Florian with new confidence and heart-felt joy.

Florian was struck by the fact that the greater part of the newspapers had not printed his last reading notice. That was Przewalski's doing. As soon as he learned of the contemplated performance of *Christ*, he notified all the editors either directly or through in-

intermediaries that this Florian Mayr was a swindler of the worst kind whom Liszt had expelled from his circle on account of disgraceful conduct; that in addition to this he had never directed an orchestra and for that reason alone was the most unfit champion imaginable of the genius of Liszt for the imperial capital. On the strength of this and without making further inquiries, most of the editors had simply tossed Florian's next reading notice into the waste basket.

That was a week before the performance. The excitement and over-exertion had already thrown Florian into so feverish a state that he was no longer capable of ferreting out the cause of this sudden unfriendliness on the part of the press. His next notice was to read: "Abbé Dr. Franz Liszt has arrived in Berlin in order to attend in person the performance of his oratorio *Christ* which will take place on next Saturday at seven o'clock in such and such a church under the direction of his pupil, Florian Mayr." They would have to print that and then all would be well; in Florian's estimation large receipts were already assured. Thus far, to be sure, not a single ticket had been sold and the only audience that could be confidently counted upon consisted of the friends and relatives of those who were to take part, every one of whom, man and woman, had begged at least two complimentary tickets. Florian's ready cash was almost all gone for what he had not advanced in salaries he had been obliged to give to the agent as a guaranty. He had not even kept enough to procure proper nourishment for himself during the trying weeks of preparation. He took his noon-day meals in wretched cabmen's resorts or in the soup kitchens and at night contented himself principally

with bread and cheese. But in spite of all these deprivations and the undue strain on his nerves, his enthusiasm for his bold undertaking still kept him up. Confidence in his ultimate triumph grew upon him the nearer the day of the performance approached. His revered Master's joyful gratitude for the splendid surprise he had in store for him was to be his greatest reward.

Not until the evening of his first general rehearsal did he inform Liszt of the great event that was about to take place and invite him to attend the performance. He knew that the Master intended to remain in Weimar this year till the end of October and he was absolutely sure that he would gladly accept and postpone for a few days his trip to Rome. It was five days before an answer arrived. The envelope bore an Italian postage stamp. Florian tore it open with trembling hands. His eyes flew over the lines. Suddenly he cried out,—it was a suppressed oath such as one utters in violent pain,—again he stared at the letter and then, as if feeling for some support, he grasped at the air with both hands outspread,—and fell in a faint.

The widow Stoltenhagen who was busy at the moment in the adjoining room heard a noise that sounded as if a chair had been thrown violently to the floor and then a dull thud. She ran to her tenant's room in a fright and entered without knocking. Her first thought was that her choleric Herr Mayr had probably hurled a chair at the head of one of the singers who studied with him and she was going to forbid him once for all to treat her furniture in that fashion. But when she found Herr Mayr stretched out as if lifeless on the floor, holding a letter crushed in his left hand,

she clasped her hands together, exclaiming: "My God, he's had a stroke!"

But, before she summoned assistance, she carefully drew the letter from the fingers of the unconscious man, took it to the window, and with feverish anxiety tried to read it.

It ran as follows:

ROME, HOTEL ALIBERT, VIA BABUINO,
November 3rd, 1880.

"My dear young friend:

It is hard for me to say 'no.' I cannot possibly give my consent to have my oratorio of *Christ* which is dedicated to his Holiness the Pope first produced in Germany and, especially in Berlin of all cities in the world, for that is the headquarters of the 'kulturkampf' against our church,—and still less to have it given in a Protestant place of worship. You meant it for the best, my dear St. Florian, and I know how deeply I am paining you,—but I cannot act otherwise. Even should my 'religious scruples' seem to you of no importance, there are still reasons enough left why a performance of my *Christ* in Berlin would be displeasing to me. How could I feel otherwise in the face of negative criticisms and why should I not prefer to bide my time in peace alone? In these days the artist reckons without his host if he honestly puts his trust in the public. They listen and judge only according to the newspapers. In a way I profit by this inasmuch as Vienna, Budapest, Leipsic, Berlin, Paris, London, etc., and their most distinguished and influential papers, which denounce my compositions as worthless and repellent, relieve me of all necessity of making a choice. Why give performances for people who only want to read newspapers? Why, too, did you not write me sooner of your plan? Furthermore with the best intentions in the world I could not have gone to Berlin. I stayed in Wei-

mar unusually late this year and it was impossible to put off my trip to Rome any longer.

"Take my cordial thanks for your good intentions. I am sure you would have accomplished something excellent, my brave St. Florian, and try not to be angry with

Your sincere friend

FRANZ LISZT."

Of course Frau Stoltenhagen could not decipher in so short a time the fine rapid rather large strokes of this handwriting but from the first lines she discovered that nothing was to come of the performance upon which Herr Mayr had worked so long, and that satisfied her curiosity for the present. She then called her niece from Pomerania, who still lived with her, having failed to interest any of the gentlemen who had occupied the room during the summer. By a combined effort the two women dragged the unconscious man to the bed. Frau Stoltenhagen made him as comfortable as possible, taking off his shoes and outer clothing and unbuttoning his stiff collar. Then she went for the physician, impressing it upon the girl that she must apply cold compresses to the patient's head and not let him stir from his bed. It was impossible to foresee what a good thing it might be if, when he came to, his first glance should rest upon her as his good angel. It had not infrequently happened that fine young gentlemen married their nurses.

Florian had recovered consciousness before the physician arrived. He looked wildly about and at once recognized the Pomeranian niece just at the moment when she was engaged on her own account in the careful perusal of the letter.

"Will you give me that letter, you goose, you

stupid!" were his first words and his voice was not exactly flutelike.

The girl shrieked in terror and with the letter in her outstretched hand timidly approached the bed. He snatched it from her and stared at it, but the characters swam before his eyes and he sank back upon the pillow with a groan.

It was a long time before she ventured, very softly, to ask if he did not wish a fresh compress.

"Compress! What's that mean?" stammered Florian with thick tongue. Then he suddenly roused himself into a half sitting posture and in a rage he flung the wet towel which had slipped from his head into the middle of the room. "There you've got your compress!" he cried hoarsely. "If I could only suppress you all with it, you miserable mob! My God, I'd like to smash the lot of you, the whole lot! What are you standing there that way for, woman? What are you looking at? There, take my watch, my coat, my trousers, my shirt for all I care, and take them to the pawn-shop; — if you don't, you'll never see another penny of mine."

"Oh, Herr Mayr, it can't be so bad as all that!" said the good niece, trying to comfort him. "Wait till you get well again."

"What, do you think I'm sick?" cried Florian in a rage. "I can't be sick, I haven't time,— nonsense!" He pounded his forehead with both fists: "Only you stand by me, you old skull! ha, ha, ha!" and he burst into mocking laughter. Then he sank back exhausted. But it was only for a few moments that he rested, breathing heavily; then he suddenly sprang from the bed on both feet. The girl was frightened and started

to run away but with a loud "Stop!" he brought her to a standstill on the threshold. He took a few steps across the room and became aware that he was scarcely able to stand. He beckoned the niece and, steadying himself on her shoulder, he reached his writing desk.

"Oh dear, Herr Mayr! Don't you want to put on your trousers?" exclaimed the girl in a kindly tone as she saw him sink into the chair before the desk, limp and exhausted.

"Will you help me on with them, my child?" replied Florian, raising his head and smiling feebly. "But don't make any mistake, you won't get anything for it. It's all over with me;—to-morrow I'll have to go begging."

"Oh, pshaw, how can you talk that way?" laughed the niece good-humoredly, laying her red, chapped, workworn hands consolingly upon his shoulder. "An artist like you don't go to pieces so easily!"

"Hm, the toad has some feeling!" said Florian with a melancholy smile. "I'll leave you something in my will, Fräulein Frieda. I still own a respectable umbrella; or would you rather have a copy of Goethe's poems? My God, it's all over with me,—it's all over with me!" He buried his face in his hands and his head fell heavily on the desk.

For a long while he sat there in this position, just groaning faintly from time to time. He recovered himself at last and, having sent the girl away, he dressed. When the physician arrived, the patient was no longer to be found. The niece had begged and besought him but could not hold him back. At the nearest groggery he had drunk two glasses of brandy to rouse his flagging spirits and then had taken his sorrowful way to his

agent to tell him that the performance could not take place.

The days which now followed brought with them trials that it was beyond human power to endure. The agent had cheated Florian shamelessly and, instead of paying the stipulated salaries, had simply embezzled the money. And Florian had put confidence in the man,—he had not asked for a single receipt! Demands for payment and threats of suit showered in upon him. Against the scoundrel who had cheated him he was powerless for he had neither papers nor witnesses to produce in evidence and, since he was entirely without means, he was unable to bring suit on his own behalf. Some of his creditors had come to his room to denounce him as a swindler and in some of the newspapers the announcement of the failure of the *Christ* performance was accompanied by malicious comments. Certain musical periodicals in particular published notices full of spiteful allusions to the bold swindle which another of the so-called “favorite pupils” of Liszt had tried to perpetrate. Florian was no longer able to defend himself; he had not the strength to put his denials into written form or in any other way to bring his detractors to an accounting. A severe typhus fever had thrown him helpless upon a sick bed.

In this emergency the most natural thing for the widow Stoltenhagen to have done was to pack her sick tenant off to a hospital, for at first he lay there quite unconscious and consequently could give no expression to his wishes; besides he was absolutely bankrupt. No one could have blamed her for taking this course, but singularly enough she insisted upon keeping him there, nursing him herself and even advancing the money

necessary for the physician and apothecary. In spite of the fact that her awful curiosity and her little speculations had thoroughly enraged the good Florian and that for two whole years she had been obliged to swallow in retaliation his choicest insults and most malicious thrusts, yet in her widowed heart a strange feeling of faithful attachment, yes, one might almost say, of embittered tenderness had found an abiding place. Doubtless this feeling derived its chief nourishment from the hope that after all fate had ordained that her Pomeranian niece was to become Frau Florian Mayr. This persistent hope had recently been strengthened by the discovery that Florian had called her Frieda a "toad with some feeling" and had promised to leave her in his will his new umbrella or even a copy of Goethe's poems. With this niece, now so full of prospects, she shared the not too easy task of caring for the sick man and with fair conscientiousness she followed the directions of the physician.

When the typhus had reached its crisis and Florian was raving in wild phantasies day and night, Baron von Ried called. He had read the shameful charges in the papers and now had come to learn the truth from the lips of his severely arraigned friend and, if need be, to offer him his assistance. He heard with dismay of the baleful effect which this all too severe trial had had upon the unfortunate Florian. He sat by the sick man's bedside until the physician came. From him he learned that the hope of recovery was only very slight. He subsequently ascertained from Frau Stoltenhagen that Florian's financial condition was equally desperate. Although he himself was by no means a man of wealth, he presented the faithful widow with a couple of gold

pieces and promised to raise among Florian's friends and acquaintances a fund that should help him out of his troubles; he would also let his parents know what had happened.

The very next day the baron came again to inquire after the patient. But this time he was not alone. He brought with him a very elegant young lady, who, in spite of the violent opposition of the widow Stoltenhagen, succeeded in making her way to the sick room. It was Ilonka Badacs. She had played at a concert the night before and the baron had instantly sought her out.

At the sight of her friend so near to death's door she showed deep emotion and announced her firm resolution not to leave his bedside, at least until the crisis should be past. She had brought a little valise with her containing her principal necessities. The physician was very glad to find that in these days of danger there was going to be an intelligent and sensible woman at the patient's side and he did all he could to overcome the jealous opposition of Frau Stoltenhagen and her niece. The conclusive argument in this matter, however, was that Fräulein Badacs made herself responsible for the rent and all the expenses incident to the illness.

The next night came the crisis. Frau Stoltenhagen and her niece had gone to bed, when the fever returned with terrific intensity. The thermometer which Ilonka had put in his arm pit rose in a few minutes to over 106°. With wide open eyes Florian flung himself restlessly about in bed and talked incessantly, for the most part unintelligible, crazy stuff. He laughed aloud, he thrashed about him with his fists, and ground

his teeth as if he were in some wild struggle with an enemy. Now and then a few names and sentences could be understood. Evidently his Weimar experiences again occupied his mind for he called several of Liszt's pupils by name and every now and then spoke the word "Master." All at once he began to shout loudly and distinctly: "I'm a fallen man,—fallen! My God, oh, the deuce and all! Ilonka don't make me suffer that! Don't you hear? Ilonka, I'm crazy, I'm going to marry you or the devil may sew me up in a bagpipe. What do you want of the English horn? Slap, bang, now you have it! That's the way, ha, ha, ha! Hurry up, the train leaves in ten minutes. Oh, you sweet treasure, darling, my only one! It's a lie, it's not so. I won't let you out! Oho! 'Finis Poloniae.' See, the funeral barges are coming. There she lies, nothing but flowers, nothing but lilies! my Ilonka!"

At this she sobbed aloud and threw herself upon him. Holding his restlessly waving arms fast in her two hands, she brought her face close to his. "No, no, dear friend, I'm here," she cried, "your Ilonka is here with you,—just look!"

He opened his eyes still wider and stared at her; something resembling a smile flitted over his burning face. She took the ice bag from his head to refill it and gave him his febrifuge. He swallowed it but in another moment he began to laugh, chatter, groan, whimper, and thrash about in such noisy and mad confusion that she did not venture to leave his side.

"What is it now? What my little dove want?" she whispered close to his ear, as she pushed the damp hair back from his brow with her delicate fingers.

He gazed at her steadily and murmured something which she could not understand.

"What you want? You poor dear boy! Everything you want you shall have, if you'll only get well again." His hands groped about uncertainly upon the counterpane. She gave him both of hers and he held them fast, oh, so fast! in a feverish grip. He tugged at them feebly and raised them slowly to his hot forehead until they rested soothingly, caressingly on his throbbing temples. That seemed to do him good. He let his own hands fall back limply upon the counterpane where they lay quiet. Then he closed his eyes and soon began to breathe deeper and more regularly.

Ilonka was kneeling by his bedside with her hands outstretched in the most uncomfortable position in the world. She ached in every joint; her limbs grew numb, but she dared not move. Her soft cool touch seemed to hypnotize him; — in a few minutes he was sound asleep.

The next morning great joy reigned among the three nurses when the physician declared that the crisis was successfully passed and the patient on the way to recovery. The unselfish devotion of one great-hearted woman had saved his life.

CHAPTER XVIII

Victory at Last

NEXT morning, as soon as the physician had declared the crisis of the disease passed, Ilonka packed up her few things and was driven to her hotel, in order to fulfill the first duty to exhausted nature by taking a good long sleep. And when she awoke towards noon, reinvigorated and as hungry as a bear, she could think only with a shudder of the close sick-room air and all the ridiculously repulsive duties which the care of a patient slowly recovering from fever and weakened to the point of helplessness had imposed upon her. *Teremtete!* — faugh! That was not in her line. She had been obviously called upon to stand by her helpless, deserted friend in his struggle with death, and she had done her duty and helped him over the mountain. She had done it willingly too, and heaven might well forgive her a bunch of amorous piccadillos as a reward for her labor of love. But now she longed to live again and be merry. She reflected, too, that it would be dangerous to heap her coals of fire too high upon Florian's crazy pate, for the fellow was quite capable of persecuting her, out of pure gratitude, with his tiresome love, and even offers of marriage, for the rest of her life. Besides she had no more time to waste now, for she was to play at a concert in Dresden on the next day but one,— and besides she needed money.

Her mind was soon made up. She lunched well and

heartily at noon and then wrote two letters, the first to Baron von Ried and the other to Thekla. Then, after a moment's reflection, she also wrote a line or two on her visiting-card to a music-loving officer in the Guards whose acquaintance she had made not long before. She sent the letter to Thekla by a messenger, who was instructed to wait for an answer, and in the meantime she stretched herself out on the lounge for a comfortable noonday siesta.

Fräulein Burmester followed almost on the heels of the messenger who announced to Ilonka that she was on the way.

"How sweet of you to write me! Thank you a thousand times!" she called out to Ilonka as she entered. "I've had such an awful time again,—my parents read all those nasty things about Herr Mayr in the papers. You can imagine how mamma used them to sneer at me and humiliate me. But even papa believed it all too. I was looking forward so eagerly to the concert. I thought of course Herr Mayr would triumph over all his enemies and be a celebrated man right off. Those were all lies, weren't they, Fräulein, that were in the papers? If I'd only a suspicion that poor Herr Mayr was so ill!"

Ilonka made the excited girl sit down beside her on the lounge and asked with a smile, "Well, what you done if you known, eh? Papa and mamma would never allow you go nurse him, that would be wrong for respectable young lady!"

"Oh, that would have been all the same to me!" cried Thekla ardently. "There are higher duties than obeying papa and mamma when they want one to do something silly!"

"Brava!" exclaimed Ilonka, putting her arm tenderly round Thekla's slender waist. Then she told about Liszt's letter, which of course she had read, and about Florian's grave financial situation, as much as she herself knew about it. And finally she described the course of the sickness and pointed out the great importance to the patient of careful nursing, particularly just now, when the slightest excitement might be the cause of a fatal relapse. And she added a wee but weighty falsehood to the effect that Florian, in his fever delirium, had never ceased to ask for his Thekla.

"What, he asked for me?" whispered Thekla with a rapturous smile. "He shall not be disappointed in me. I'm going right to him and I shall stay with him until he doesn't need me any longer! And I sha'n't ask anybody's permission either! It's just lovely that papa and mamma aren't at home. I'll drive right to the house, pack up what's necessary, and then you must take me to him!"

"Me? Oho, I think not at all!" replied Ilonka, shaking her head. "You just leave me quite out! When he wake up you must be first one he sees. He need not know I was there at all."

Then suddenly Thekla threw her arms round Ilonka and cried, scarcely able to restrain her tears, "Oh, you're so good, and I'm so bad! I thought you —"

Ilonka put her hand over Thekla's mouth and said with a laugh, "I know, I know, little one! No matter — we all jealous when we are in love!"

Then the two girls took an affectionate leave of each other with all kinds of good wishes for the future. Ilonka gave Thekla the address of Baron von Ried, so that she might have a trustworthy friend to turn to in

case she needed advice, and counseled her to take as much money as possible with her, as she had not found a single penny in Florian's possession.

Between five and six o'clock in the afternoon of the same day Thekla and her trunk arrived in the Luisenplatz. Frau Stoltenhagen eyed her with unconcealed disapproval, but nevertheless finally allowed her to enter the sick-chamber, as she claimed to have been sent by Fräulein Badacs to take her place. From reasons of prudence Thekla did not give the landlady her real name, so that she should not be tempted to communicate with her parents.

Florian still slept the deep sleep of convalescence. When at last, towards seven o'clock, he finally awoke and saw the sweet young girl in the simple gray woolen dress sitting on the edge of his bed, he stared long at the lovely vision, as one lost in a dream, but without emotion, until at last a smile of recognition flitted across his emaciated features.

"Thekla!" he cried softly, and his hands groped about for hers.

"Yes, I am here with you," she replied, "and now you're going to be quite well again soon!"

"Now I'm going to be quite well again soon!" he repeated after her and continued to gaze steadily into her eyes.—

And Florian really did get well again, though very slowly. It was not until a few days before Christmas that he was able, with the aid of a walking-stick and Thekla's arm, to take a short walk in the open air. But from that time he convalesced rapidly.

All this time Thekla had lived under the same roof with him. At first she had slept in his room on the

lounge, and then Frau Stoltenhagen was obliged to rent a small room for her in another apartment of the same house under her own name, in order to avoid reporting Thekla's to the police. Overcoming all false modesty, Thekla had taken upon herself the arduous duties of a nurse with a devotion and thoughtfulness that compelled the admiration of the attending physician and finally overcame even Frau Stoltenhagen's hostility. Of course the good woman was not long in discovering that this pretty, well-bred young lady was Florian's chosen bride and that there was absolutely no more hope for her niece. And Frieda herself preferred to give up her designs upon her aunt's lodger and took a position as saleswoman in a butter and cheese shop in a particularly military quarter of the city, where her chances of making the acquaintance of nice gentlemen only were numerous.

From time to time Thekla communicated in a roundabout way with her foster-parents, but without revealing her biding-place or the real reason for her absence. What most retarded Florian's convalescence was the unavoidable worry about his money-affairs. The sheriff's deputy called at least once every week to deliver official communications or make some attachment, and of course this could not be kept from the patient after he had recovered his senses. To be sure, a few of his smaller debts had been met, thanks to the exertions of Baron von Ried, but there were still some thousand marks outstanding, for which Florian was obliged to give notes, in the hope of meeting them out of the profits of a new concert tour. The room-rent and the expenses of his illness Thekla paid, but towards Christmas her means, too, were well-nigh exhausted, in spite

of the fact that she had pawned nearly all the jewelry that she had brought with her. And so at last Florian's watch, his evening-suit and whatever else was not absolutely necessary for the moment wandered to the pawn-office.

But worst of all was the probability that Florian would be prevented from following his calling for months. Playing the piano was of course entirely out of the question until his nerves had quite recovered their normal strength, and then it was very probable that he would need quite a long period of practice before he got back his old technical facility. It would have been very easy for the rich Consul Burmester to pull a couple of big bills out of his safe and so put an end to all worry, but Florian's pride rebelled against begging of the man who doubtless regarded him as the seducer that had enticed his beloved daughter from the straight and narrow path. That he would marry Thekla, with or without the Burmesters' blessing, Florian had firmly made up his mind. But he wished to earn the means to do so himself. He was not going to accept any money from the Burmesters so long as they threw it to their daughter merely as a kind of humiliating charity. Only Thekla's steadfast belief in his future, the serene cheerfulness which she always showed towards him, kept up his courage and drove from his sick-room the specter of anxiety time and time again.

Baron von Ried, too, proved himself a true friend and called frequently to consult with Thekla about business matters and to further her efforts to brighten up the sick man when he showed a tendency to be despondent. Later on he brought his raven-tressed sweetheart, Libussa Tomatschek, with him, and even

the handsome Toby Tomatschek, who had a pusillanimous fear of contagious diseases, consented towards the end to be one of the company when Florian's few friends gathered in his sick-room for tea. The great man could be very agreeable and considerate on such occasions. He told amusing stories of theatrical and artistic life extremely well, and occasionally played for them on his violin, of which instrument he was really a master. In fact Herr Tomatschek had become much more human since his daughter had scored a pretty success on the stage and had finally been more or less cured of her indolent dreams of genius which had prevented her turning her talents to any account. The baron's play, which bore the brutal title, *The Blackguard*, had proved a failure, but Libussa Tomatschek, who had played the principal rôle in the piece, had been hailed by the critics as possessing unquestionable talent, so that the baron's efforts had been at least successful in starting this girl, whose queer nature had now attracted and now repelled him, upon a regular and reasonable course. Otherwise she still remained; as the baron poetically put it, a "pseudo-demoniac terrier" and a "frog with oak-leaves." Even Jean d'Oettern, to whom in noble unselfishness the baron had brought her, that he might complete the task of awakening her femininity, had made an absolute failure of this difficult case.

At their unpretentious but jolly evening gatherings, Thekla played the hostess in the most charming manner. Everybody was in love with her, not excepting Libussa of the frowning brow. Everybody called her "sweet Frau Thekla," and one evening the baron even went so far as to declare with deep emotion that for her

sake he was ready to abjure all his heretical theories in regard to holy matrimony. Thekla's relation to her sick lover was looked upon as a real marriage by their little coterie of friends.

A few days before Christmas Thekla left her Florian, who no longer had need of her nursing, to return to her parents. Florian would have needed to say but a single word and she would have remained with him as his wife, even without her parents' consent and, therefore, without legal recognition. In the five or six weeks during which she had been with him as a sister of charity she had learned what poverty was with its burdensome cares and the dread of the coming day. She had learned what the illness of the bread-winner meant to a family without means, and how much courage and strength of character an artist-life, this weary dragging oneself from disappointment to disappointment, from renunciation to renunciation, demanded; and yet at a sign from the man she loved she would gladly have given up her comfortable but meaningless existence to share his uncertain future. During this period of trial she had developed all her good characteristics to the very best advantage. The reckless dash which, like a canary that has never learned to fly, she had made from her golden cage into freedom, so fraught with danger, had been, strangely enough, a complete success. The strictly watched young girl without purpose in life had been transformed into a mature young woman who knew how to use her intellectual and physical powers to good purpose.

But Florian was not willing to ask a further sacrifice of her. It was still possible that the Burmesters, or at all events the consul, would recognize her noble

courage and bring themselves to assent, even though unwillingly, to her heart's choice. In that case it was probable that they would give her out of their superfluity at least enough to keep her from need for the rest of her life. Florian was willing to accept that much as soon as he had worked himself once more into a position where he could present himself before her foster-parents as a man who had won a respectable station in life and a tolerable subsistence. If now Thekla should go further and outrage every rule of custom and decency that her parents held in honor, it might be regarded as a certainty that they would disown her entirely and leave her to her fate without any assistance whatever. He therefore advised her himself to return first to the Burmesters and to do what they wished until he should feel justified in claiming her for good. Nor should she bind herself by any promise to him. As long as she loved him she would wait for him, that was a matter of course. That she would no longer allow herself to be coerced, he was convinced. If she married another, he knew it would be because she had ceased to love him. And he begged her earnestly not to humiliate him by covert financial assistance. He would manage somehow to fight his way honestly through, until he should once more be able to support himself in a dignified manner by his profession.

With deep emotion the betrothed pair took leave of each other in their Luisenplatz rooms, and then Florian carried her valise for her as far as the Markgrafenstrasse, for both together did not have money enough to pay for a cab. One more silent press of the hand and she pulled the bell at the entrance of the palatial edifice

in which she had grown to womanhood, while he departed with giant strides without once looking round.—

The consul was out. Frau Olga received the prodigal alone. She welcomed her with icy coldness; and, after Thekla had told the simple truth in a resolute voice, her foster-mother, losing all control of herself, overwhelmed the poor girl with a storm of furious threats and insulting abuse.

“I knew,” she closed her passionate outburst, “I knew well enough that you would end this way from the day I caught you hiding that dirty, back-stairs novel under your pillow. With such parents you couldn’t help being attracted by what is low. Between us all is over — I’ll never call you my daughter again! And you needn’t think that we shall give you the means to go on living with that fellow. You may just see how you can get on without us! You can become a sister of charity if you’ve got such a passion for nursing!”

The consul received his pet in quite a different manner. He clasped her in his arms without saying a word, and, after she had poured out her heart to him, he let her cry herself out on his breast and even cried with her. But nevertheless he could not bring himself to look with approval upon Thekla’s relation to Florian nor to believe in his innocence and magnanimity which Thekla praised so enthusiastically. Florian was and remained for him one who was branded in the eyes of the world, and he was convinced that there was a good deal of truth in the things that the newspapers had said about the young pianist. On the evening of the same day a bitter controversy took place between the consul and his wife, with the result that Thekla was

informed that after Christmas she would be taken to Lausanne by her father and there placed in an institute for young ladies.

During the holidays Frau Burmester made a point of appearing at concerts and social gatherings with Thekla and took pains to be extremely affectionate towards her, with a view to disarming the gossip that had naturally been engendered by the mysterious disappearance of the young lady, and Thekla was obliged by keeping silence to substantiate her mother's falsehoods. At home they never spoke to each other.—

Florian's Christmas was a sad one. His parents had sent him fifty marks at the baron's instigation. With the best intentions in the world they could not spare more. Nor did Florian wish to be a burden to them or to his few other friends who had assisted him in his misfortunes. He preferred to regard all these contributions as loans, and resolved not to rest until he had repaid every penny, including the amount of his notes. His friends advised him to ask assistance of Liszt, who, after all, as the real cause of all his misfortunes, was most bound to give it. But of that Florian would not hear. Liszt's pocketbook was already dipped into by so many unworthy persons, who called themselves his pupils and who sent him the bills of their shoemakers, their tailors, and their landlords in return for his kindness in tolerating their presence. Florian did not care to place himself on the same footing with such parasites.

He first tried to earn a living as a musical critic; but, as soon as he made himself known in a newspaper office, people recalled the *Christ* fiasco and refused to have anything to do with him. It would have been an easy matter to prove his innocence by producing Liszt's let-

ter, but, if he had done so, the newspapers would have taken the affair up again and would certainly not have failed to pour out the vials of their mockery upon the pious Abbé, who did not count the enemies of the Pope worthy to listen to his music, and Florian wished neither to expose his venerated Master to derision nor himself to the suspicion of taking an ignoble revenge. The position in the conservatory that he had formerly occupied had of course long since been filled, and the other schools had nothing to offer him. He could not present himself again at the aristocratic houses where he had formerly received ten marks an hour, for the poison of calumny, injected by Przewalski, in addition to the denunciations of the newspapers, had not failed of its effect in those circles. Besides it was the custom in such families to require of their daughters' teachers that they should now and then display their art at social functions, and Florian had, to his horror, convinced himself by a first trial, undertaken against the orders of his physician, that he could not play at all. His fingers trembled to such an extent that he was not able to run a decent C-major scale. With that naïveté which is apt to distinguish the guild of physicians, his good doctor had ordered him to abstain from all mental activity, to nourish himself abundantly, and take lots of exercise in the open air.

The last part of this advice, at any rate, proved easy to follow. Every morning for a whole week Florian was to be found in the motley crowd of the unemployed that besieged the offices of the *Intelligenzblatt* and the *Voss Gazette* in order to get hold of the first moist numbers and scan with trembling haste the columns under the caption "Help Wanted." Then he ran

about the whole day from one address to another and offered his services as messenger, market-assistant, whitewasher, and everything else possible and impossible, but always without success. The only thing he managed to pick up was a few piano lessons in poor people's houses at fifty pfennigs an hour! He was glad to get them. To be sure, he did not show these patrons his recommendations from Liszt and Wagner.

In order to make use of all his leisure time he answered an advertisement in the *Voss Gazette* for a newspaper-carrier, and, to his great joy, obtained the position and was assigned to a district comprising a part of the avenue Unter den Linden and the Wilhelmstrasse. In this way he got exercise enough in the open air, to say the least, and also the entry to the finest houses. He took up his new duties on the first of January and one of the first houses in which he left his "Aunt Voss" was the palace of the Countess Tockenburg!

It was fortunate that in this aristocratic neighborhood he was not obliged to climb many flights of stairs, for he would not have been physically able to do that. He had given up his room at Frau Stoltenhagen's, which was too dear for his present circumstances, and had rented a modest little chamber in a rear house of the new Rossstrasse. At first he returned from his carrying expeditions dead tired and incapable of any other occupations for hours. He earned barely enough to be able to eat his fill in the public soup-kitchen and pay his rent at the end of the month.

To be sure he meditated upon turning his back on this terrible Berlin to try his luck in some other musical city, ignorant of himself and his misfortunes, but that after all would have been "letting the sparrow out

of his hand in order to catch the pigeon on the roof." It seemed best to persevere patiently until his returning health should enable him to practice his profession once more. Nor did he wish to be a burden to his parents, quite outside the consideration that he would have to borrow the traveling expenses. His hard luck had only served to intensify his pride, to stiffen his backbone, and, as the phrase runs, to grow hair on his teeth. He would fight it out alone. He kept his new address concealed even from the baron and his few other friends. Thekla alone, with whom he had carried on a lively correspondence ever since she had gone to Lausanne, knew where he was.

Fortunately the weather in January and the first half of February had been mostly bright, dry and cold, which so strengthened Florian's nerves that the churlishness of the elements during the rest of February and the month of March did not affect his health. In the meantime he had rented an upright piano and begun to practice regularly. In the course of six weeks he had made such progress that his fingers again obeyed him willingly; but there was still much to do before he could think of undertaking a concert tour. In the first place he found no time to apply himself to his practice as a virtuoso should who must command an extensive repertory without notes. He therefore gave up his connection with the *Voss Gazette* on the first of April as well as his fifty-pfennig lessons.

As he was now in form to play to people and able to make use of his splendid recommendations, he succeeded in obtaining excellent engagements in well-to-do families as pianist and accompanist, and also as coach for singers in studying their parts. He was thus

enabled, not only to earn a living, but began as well to lay aside small sums for the settlement of his debts. He also began negotiations with agencies outside of Berlin, through which numerous engagements for the summer were held out to him. And now at last, when the black night of misfortune had begun to flee before the dawn of a happier future; when his dogged pride had triumphed over Fate's cruellest persecutions,— now at last he sat down and wrote his beloved Master a faithful account of all that had happened and asked for his assistance in case a suitable position as teacher or conductor should become vacant.

By return post came the answer from Rome. Liszt had had no idea how disastrous his refusal to allow the performance of his *Christ* had been for his poor Florian. At the time he had not yet recovered from the effects of his wearisome journey and was already so taken up by all sorts of demands upon him in Rome, that he had not reflected upon the consequences of his refusal. But several weeks later, when, in surprise at hearing nothing further from Florian, he turned the matter over in his mind and discussed it with his young friends, he had indeed come to the conclusion that he had evilly rewarded the devotion of his zealous champion. He had thought, so he now wrote, that Florian had been angry with him on that account, and he had written a long explanation and offered to make good any losses that Florian might personally have suffered. This letter, however, had been returned as undeliverable. In the most cordial terms, Liszt now expressed the really fatherly sympathy which he felt for the misfortunes of his favorite pupil, and promised him not only the payment of his debts but also the most com-

plete vindication for the slanders that had been heaped upon him. At the beginning of May he would stop a few days in Berlin before returning to Weimar, and would take advantage of the opportunity to introduce Florian personally to several aristocratic families, as well as to the principal musical potentates of the capital. He already had a suitable position picked out for him, but did not care to talk about it until he was sure of securing it.

Florian was naturally overjoyed at receiving this letter, and a feeling of such pure joy and exultation came over him as he had never known in his happiest Weimar days. He threw himself into his practicing with fanatical zeal and made astonishing progress. He also rented in a better quarter of the city a larger room, in which he installed a grand piano. His aversion to the society of his fellow-beings suddenly disappeared. The people, in whose houses he taught and played, were delighted with his gayety and his witty Bavarian bluntness, and, if he had not needed his time for something better, he might have become the lion of the musical salons.

He wrote Thekla almost daily, if it was only a humorous line or two on a postcard. Out of the unexpectedly large sum which a rich banker paid him for a private recital he bought a beautiful ring for his sweetheart, which he begged her to regard for the time being as an engagement-ring. She was to do everything she possibly could to get permission to come to Berlin during the first week in May in order to be a witness of his triumph. In case he should really obtain the position that Liszt had in mind for him, he intended to ask her foster-parents for her hand.—

On the evening of the third of May a brilliant musical soirée took place at the Palais Tockenbourg to which the very best society of the capital was invited. Even the Crown Prince and his consort, as well as several other Princes and Princesses of the royal family, had accepted the invitation with pleasure, for a special attraction was promised for this evening: the venerable Master, Franz Liszt, was to be present. From eight o'clock on, carriage after carriage drew up at the entrance to the palace and a crowd of bystanders waited about in spite of the inclement weather to see the elegant ladies in their magnificent toilettes descend, as well as the highest Court dignitaries, the brightest lights in the worlds of art and science and the members of the reigning family. Shortly after half-past eight the coupé of the Countess Tockenbourg drew up before the entrance. The palace porter, who, with his curved Turkish saber hanging from a broad bandelier of cloth-of-gold, a befeathered chapeau upon his haughty head, and an imposing wand tipped with a gilt ball in his hand, presented such an awe-inspiring appearance that without any doubt the inhabitants of whatever desert island he might have landed on would have thrown themselves flat on their faces before him,—this mighty man scorned not to hurry down the stone steps in his own magnificent person and open the carriage-door, for he knew that the countess had sent her own equipage to fetch the great Master of music from his hotel. But the gaunt young man in evening-dress, without a single decoration, who sprang so lightly out of the coupé that his long brown hair flopped about his ears, that surely couldn't be —? The stately porter quite forgot his dignity and stood there staring

with open mouth. Well, what extraordinary resemblances there were, to be sure! This young gentleman, who was helping the venerable guest of honor of his gracious mistress out of the carriage, was the absolute double of — what's-his-name — the paper-carrier, Mayr, with whom he had so often gossiped in the porter's lodge! But what was that? The young gentleman, who was evidently also a great artist, took off his hat to him, the porter of Count Tockenburg, called him by name and wished him good-evening!

"How are you? How are you getting on? How's your family?"

The porter was too astounded to answer. And behold — the great Franz Liszt himself nodded pleasantly to him and said:

"Aha! The gentlemen are already acquainted! I am sorry, my dear sir, that Herr Mayr will no longer be able to bring you the newspapers, for he has just seen fit to accept a professorship in the conservatory of music at Munich!" And with a hearty laugh the aged Master ascended the stairs on the arm of his young friend.

When the carriage drove up the porter had made a sign to a lackey who announced to His Excellency Count Tockenburg and the countess the arrival of their celebrated guest, and thus the great Master was received by his hosts at the head of the stairs.

As soon as the usual phrases of greeting had been exchanged, Liszt turned to Florian, who had modestly remained a few paces behind, and drew him forward by the hand, saying:

"*Votre Excellence et chère Comtesse — vous me permettez de vous présenter mon jeune ami Florian Mayr,*

artiste de qualité supérieure et de qui je fais grand cas, moi! Je vous demande pardon pour le sans façon de l'introduction, mais —

"Mais cela va sans dire, cher maître," chirruped Countess Fifi in her most birdlike tone. *"Je suis enchantée — ah, tiens! Mayr — sans e, avec y-grec — Florian Mayr? Mais je me souviens — mais certes!"*

She raised her long-handled lorgnon to her eyes and gazed at Florian critically for a moment, showing her small, white teeth as she was wont to do when her smile was particularly amiable. Then she gave him her hand, which he carried to his lips with a very pretty bow, and inquired:

"You are the *Christ* Mayr, are you not? Oh, I was so very sorry not to be able to receive you when you called. I was so deeply interested in your magnificent enterprise and I regretted extremely that you were obliged to abandon it. Unfortunately I was not quite *au fait* all winter, and yet I had so much to do; you understand —"

"Oh, lie away, you and the Old Nick!" thought Florian to himself, as he nodded affirmatively with a meaningless smile.

The Master was evidently amused by the countess's embarrassment. He chuckled in great glee and said to her, "*Ce cher Florian*, he's a most unlucky fellow — hahaha! He was not very favorably introduced to you the first time. The Badacs — pchah — *cette chère bête! Enfin* — he's always unlucky — haha! But that's going to stop now — I won't have it any longer — pchah, for I love this young man and I know he will do me honor!"

Liszt bestowed one more look of tender affection upon

his radiantly happy disciple, then gallantly gave his arm to the countess and entered the brilliantly illuminated ball-room, while His Excellency the Ambassador did not disdain to form the second pair with Florian. The count had no time to bother himself with musical matters, and was therefore unaware that, in doing this simple act of politeness, he was offering a public vindication to a man who had been branded by the press as a swindler.

Florian was glad when, soon after their entrance into the ball-room, the count was obliged to leave him in order to fulfill more important duties. He withdrew immediately into a corner, whence, thanks to his height, he could overlook the gay and brilliant throng. About noon he had received a note from Thekla who had arrived in Berlin the night before. The good-hearted consul had prevailed upon his wife, though with much difficulty, to allow their daughter to come home. The Burmesters had also received invitations for this evening, but Thekla was not sure that she would be allowed to go, as she had no new gown elegant enough for a soirée at the Countess Tockenburgh's. With beating heart Florian looked about him. He would have been desperately unhappy if his sweetheart had been absent on this, his evening of honor. The Master had promised him to arrange it so that he should be asked to play. He was well prepared, but, if Thekla was not among his hearers, it would be all up with his exultant confidence, for he felt that in that case he would be uneasy, and this evening of all others he must play well. Just then he caught sight, in the midst of the throng in the middle of the hall, of a tall lady in a sleeveless gown of yellow silk, who was

so startlingly scrawny that it could only be Frau Olga Burmester. With undignified precipitation he made his way through the crowd of distinguished guests into the vicinity of the gaunt lady, and, sure enough, it was Frau Olga. And not far from her, in conversation with an exquisite young lieutenant of Hussars, stood the little consul with his Thekla on his arm. She had on the same white gown that she had worn the winter before in this very room, but the shy young girl of a year ago had become a full-blown beauty. What eyes the little Hussar made! Florian felt a twinge of jealousy — but suddenly Thekla caught sight of him. A radiant smile of joy lighted up her face; she dropped her father's arm and hurried towards him with outstretched hand.

Long and tight he held the little hand in his and said only, "There you are!"

"Yes, here I am again!" she whispered back. And they stood there thus hand in hand, right in the midst of the flood of light, surrounded by the thousand-voiced murmur of the chattering company, gazing steadfastly into each other's eyes, lost to the world, intoxicated — dumb with joy — until the consul approached them with a very timid, "Ah, good evening, Herr Mayr!"

Without a word Florian grasped the fleshy hand of the little man and shook it cordially. And now the Frau Consul also joined the group.

"Ah, Herr Mayr, you here too?" she exclaimed acidly, bestowing at the same time a severely critical look upon her daughter. "Well, you seem to be getting on very nicely. You have recovered remarkably!"

"Yes, thank you, ma'am, I'm very well indeed!" replied Florian cheerily. "I dare say you're surprised to find me here after what happened last year. But this time I have a better introduction, you know,—the Master wishes to have me play to-night!"

"Ah, indeed!" answered Frau Burmester, looking down on him with a smile of incredulity. "I didn't notice your name on the programme." And she handed him with two fingers an elegantly printed card.

Of course his name was not there; he knew that well enough, but nevertheless he read the programme through. The names of the performers were nearly all good and well-known, and amongst them—Antonine Przewalski!

"He too!" involuntarily cried Florian aloud. Then he handed the programme back to the Frau Consul with a shrug and said,

"Never mind, the Master will arrange it all right!"

And the Master did indeed arrange it in a very simple manner. When the countess handed him the programme to read he made a grimace as his eye fell on the name "Przewalski," and he exclaimed with a frown that made his white eye-brows stand out, "Oh, that fellow! I know him! That's 'Finis Poloniae'! Well, if he plays very finely indeed perhaps I'll beg his pardon, pchah! On one occasion I prompted him with a somewhat loud — *souflet!*"

Countess Fifi, who of course did not understand the pun, replied seriously in a tone of regret, "I am sorry to say that this number must be omitted. I have never heard the gentleman play myself, but he was recommended to me by distinguished art-patrons. He sent his regrets only an hour ago. Very likely he

doesn't trust himself to play before you, dear Master!"

"Oho, bravo!" laughed Liszt much amused. "Then let my Saint Florian ride his parade-charger in his place."

The countess readily assented to this, and when Przewalski's turn came a young officer mounted the platform and announced that, in the place of the indisposed Pole, Herr Florian Mayr would, at the special request of Herr Doctor Franz Liszt, play *The Legend of Saint Francis on the Sea*.

Florian's success was complete. The Master patted him on the head before all the world, and the princely and noble guests actually crowded about him during the intermission to congratulate him, and honored him with invitations to their own musicales.

When the soirée came to a close and the imperial and royal highnesses had departed, Florian went up to Liszt, and, with a deep blush, begged permission to introduce his intended bride.

"*Tiens!*" exclaimed the Master gayly. "Is the young lady here? Have you already surmounted all the difficulties?"

"Well, no," replied Florian somewhat abashed. "I don't believe her parents want anything to do with me even yet. I despair of the mother anyhow."

"Wait, my son, I will help you!" rejoined Liszt with his kindly smile, and he allowed himself to be led through the throng of departing guests to where the Burmesters were standing.

"Ah, my friends, I am very glad to meet you again!" he cried, approaching the group with outstretched hands. "You were kind enough to honor

me when you were in Weimar. How do you do? You are great music-lovers, are you not?"

Frau Burmester was almost put out of countenance by the honor of this address and answered only with a low court bow, while the little consul replied with droll embarrassment, "Oh, I — I am quite a layman, I — I only tag along, but my wife is extremely musical!"

"Is this your daughter?" asked Liszt with a nod towards Thekla. She approached and dropped a respectful curtsy. Then Liszt took her little hand between his own mighty ones and said, as he stroked it tenderly, "My dear child, I know you well! I have heard so many nice things about you. You saved the life of my Florian. You are a brave girl, and so pretty too! Your parents must be proud of you, and our dear, stupid Florian doesn't always have bad luck, does he? Hahaha! In Weimar they used to call him 'Strong-Mayr,' but after this I shall call him 'Luck-Mayr'! *Enfin* — bravo!" And he drew the deeply blushing girl gently to him and kissed her on the forehead like a father. Then he turned smiling to Florian and gave him his right hand, while he held Thekla's still in his left, and called out so loud that the whole crowd of curious bystanders could hear,

"My dear Professor, I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart!" And, turning to Frau Burmester, he added in a loud tone, "My dear madam, when will you announce the engagement?"

Frau Olga, probably for the first time in her life, stared helplessly at her husband. But her confusion lasted but a few seconds. Oh, it was not so easy to

bluff her! A transitory flush suddenly shot into her cheeks and her eyes flashed.

"Oh," she exclaimed excitedly, her breath coming quick, "I thought to-morrow evening — just amongst ourselves! It would be a great honor for us if we might welcome you, reverend sir, at our little celebration!"

Liszt laughed in high glee and then said with a polite bow, "My dear madam, you have caught me fairly! I had really intended to be in Weimar by to-morrow night, but — no! The betrothal of my Florian — that is an event, I can't afford to miss that! *Au revoir*, my friends!"

During the whole of the next day Frau Burmester spoke not a word with Thekla. She simply had no time to do so. Early in the morning she and her husband wrote over fifty invitations to a reception in honor of the engagement of their daughter to the "Royal Bavarian Professor of Music, Florian Mayr, in the presence of the Herr Abbé, Doctor Franz Liszt." A whole regiment of messengers was engaged to transmit these invitations, and then Frau Olga drove out to order a luxurious supper from one of the first caterers in the city and to make other necessary preparations.

As very few of those invited sent regrets, Liszt found on his arrival a company, "just amongst ourselves," of at least sixty people. The function proved a very tedious one until supper was announced, but the excellent viands and generous wines at last warmed the company into more festive spirits. Consul Burmester announced the engagement in few but extremely

cordial words, and then Liszt proposed the health of the prospective bridegroom, after he had given the company, in a most unconventional tone and in his own witty, slightly ironical manner, a description of the excellent characteristics of his Saint Florian, who, from a "guileless fool," had passed through a dreadful state of "Strong-Mayrdom" and finally developed into the most enviable of all professors. Liszt said all this without rising from his seat, just as if he were chatting with the guest who sat next him, but of course the whole table listened in absolute silence, only to break forth in loud applause and cries of "Hoch!" as the Master finished and clinked glasses with Florian.

When the ices were served Florian, unwontedly inspired by the succession of fiery wines, rose and proposed a toast to his fiancée's "revered parents, under whose faithful protection and loving care this delicate rosebud, orphaned at its very birth, had burst into full-blown beauty!" It was one of those abominably absurd speeches, larded thick with monstrous falsehoods, that are wont to be launched by enthusiastic orators on all festive occasions. Florian himself had but a dim idea of the drivel with which, in the double exhilaration of wine and felicity, he regaled his hearers. But they were nevertheless mightily edified by it, and Frau Olga, who had awaited the end of his toast with an expression of anxious suspense, went so far as to kiss him on both cheeks and called him by his first name from that solemn moment.

After supper Liszt sat down at the piano and improvised a brilliant fantasia, full of power and exulting joyousness, on all manner of well-known love-motifs and wedding-marches. Florian and Thekla sat

hand in hand in front of the piano with their eyes steadfastly fixed on the aged Master's face, upon which the changing moods of his marvelous playing were expressed with inimitable clearness.

"What a magician!" she said afterwards to Florian. "I don't believe there's a person living, no matter how unmusical, who wouldn't understand the most difficult music when Liszt played it. I'm so happy to have heard him at least once!"

"Yes, you're right there, sweetheart," replied Florian. "The rest of us really ought to be ashamed to try to play the piano, hey?"

The company was of course half crazy with delight and Frau Burmester looked almost pretty, her face was so radiant with triumph. Liszt had improvised upon her grand piano! — Now there was not a single house in all musical Berlin whose rivalry she need fear. And after all she had to thank this terrible Herr Mayr for all that! Oh, he was such a delightful man — and "Professor" didn't sound so bad either!

The engagement announcements were sent out next day, and hurriedly written postcards to the more intimate friends. But Fräulein Ilonka Badacs received a telegram. The wedding was set for the end of August, after Florian had finished his summer concert tour. Baron von Ried was to be best man and Ilonka Badacs bridesmaid. The faithful girl accepted with enthusiasm. She declared she would fly to Berlin for the ceremony, even though she were in New York or Odessa.

But it so happened that she played in a concert at Leipsic the night before the wedding, so that she was not obliged to put her friendship to so severe a test.

But — in spite of all she did not come! On the morning of the wedding Florian received a letter which ran as follows:

“ Verry dear friend!

I pleased myself so much about your festive celebration but now the circumstances force me — *force majeure*, as one says, that I cannot come. Such Christian family-celebrations with a lot of awful respectable people make me nervous, where you always have to look down pious on ground or they look at you over the shoulder!

Believe me, verry dear friend, I run away from my own wedding if that uncommon stupid Count ever marry me. I got already offer from him in Pest, but I not yet decide me because he show suspicious traces of intelligence! In meantime I go tomorrow on little pleasure trip to the Switzerland with my verry dear friend, Jean d’Oettern. O, he is verry celebrated man! He also like you verry much and he lay himself though unknown at the Fräulein Bride her feet. How much I wish you joy, you know that all right. The darling sweet Fräulein Thekla I beg to kiss thousand times for me — especially on little earlap, that is sweetest thing on her! Tomorrow I drink with Jean d’Oettern a bottle of champagne and cry *Eljen* Florian and Thekla!

Forever (thine) your verry sincerely

ILONKA BADACS.

P.S. The devil he take the German orthographie — I never learn him!”

THE END

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